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CONTENTS

BEGINNING ON PAGE:

An Hour with Pablo Casals
By Eugene Cordes 164

Chicago's Free-Lance Opera
By George Louis Mayer 166

Medieval and Early Renaissance Music (A Book Review) 168

FEATURE REVIEWS

Barber's *"Vanessa"*
By Raymond Ericson 178

"Cavalleria Rusticana"
By Frank Spry 185

"Idomeneo" Returns
By Richard RePass 187

From Banal to Beautiful
By Abraham Skulsky 190

A Permanent Rainbow
By Mark Bucci 192

Purcell's *"The Fairy Queen"*
By John W. Barker 194

"Give him the prize!"
By Jack Diether 202

DEPARTMENTS

From The Editor 171

Record Reviews (Mono & Stereo) 176

Tape Reviews (Mono & Stereo) 209

Sound Ideas 215

Audio Visual ..... *omitted this month*

The Month's Jazz 211

Folk Music 218

Unlikely Corners 220

Readers' Exchange 222

SUBSCRIPTION BLANK 210

ON THE COVER: The beautiful Anna Moffo, whose *"sfumato"* portrayal of Cio-Cio-San is reviewed by Mark Bucci on page 192.



ALTHOUGH his wife is three generations younger than himself, Pablo Casals is a happily married man. He was radiant as he sat over after-lunch coffee served by his loving Martita. The last time I had seen him was directly after he had had his stroke. Then he was a waxen, shrunken figure in a wheel-chair. But what a wondrous change, a mere six months later. . .his eyes glowing, his whole being refreshed and animated. "You're looking splendid", I said. With a flaunting gesture and lustrous countenance he declared: "I have lost thirty pounds!" I would have said thirty years as well. There is something doleful and self-sacrificing in Martita's lovely face, but just then her dark eyes beamed wifely gratitude.

I was in Puerto Rico only for the day. Although pressed for time I could not leave without paying my respects to the man I love so well. Still, I did not expect Señora Casals to remember me, and as for her husband—after all that had happened, I might have become a dim memory or none at all. So I hesitated in the glaring sun a

EDITOR'S NOTE: On the afternoon of October 24th, as this issue went to press, Pablo Casals played the Bach D Major Sonata (with Horszowski) in the General Assembly hall at the United Nations—his first performance on American soil in thirty years. His only other public appearance in New York was a sentimental visit at the Manhattan School of Music, whose Artist Auxiliary Board he joined in 1918. It is therefore especially appropriate that we print this revealing interview. Its author was among the thousands who made the initial pilgrimage to Prades in 1950. Later he went to Perpignan, and more recently to San Juan. Fortunately, collectors who did not get to the Pyrenees or the Caribbean may enjoy the musical highlights of several Casals Festivals on Columbia records. And all will be interested to hear that Angel plans to re-release, in January, Casals' historic recording of the Bach Suites.

An hour with Pablo Casals

By EUGENE CORDES

few paces from the screen door which opens on the front garden. Martita saw me and called: "Come in, please."

"So you remember me!" I exclaimed, surprised. "Of course!" she cried out, as did Casals, seated at a table in the cool, far recesses of the room. I was ushered to his side and invited to have a cup of coffee. I had appeared at an opportune time—the hour which, according to the way he "plots" his time since the illness, is set aside expressly for visitors. He was eager for talk and full of it.

He told me about his "new day". In the morning he takes his famous stroll on the beach and returns to play Bach on the cello as—he accepted my turn of speech for it—"a kind of grace". After the noon meal he receives company. At 5 p.m. he gives his one lesson of the day. He explained that it would be tiring to give others because he plays along with the student throughout. (Today he was expecting Hirai, a Japanese lad who had accompanied him to France and won honorable mention in an international competition. Casals asked me to stay and hear the lesson, but unfortunately I had to catch a plane.) After his late meal, Casals listens to records from his ample collection. Otherwise he spends his day preparing for the next Puerto Rican Festival.

By this time Martita had cleared the table and disappeared into the kitchen. Her husband leaned over and said in a loud whisper: "The doctors and some of my people of the festival do not want me to conduct, but I must do one Beethoven and one Brahms." He conveyed his information with a roguish smile. Martita, coming back for the table cloth, overheard the remark and said with gentle disapproval: "No, you must not!" He was delighted by her solicitude and chuckled. "But I would be playing the piano for Victoria de Los Angeles."

"I heard from one of your students that you play the piano very well", I said. "The same as the cello", he hastened to advise. "When I was young it was a choice between the two instruments. I chose the cello and I regret it." These were not words to hear from the lips of the greatest cellist of them all, so at once I asked: "What made you choose the cello?" The answer took me aback for a second time, for it was quite out of character: "Because on the piano one can play everything and it is much easier than the cello. The cello is hard." (Suddenly he looked very tired.) Casals wished me to understand that he has not been an "inevitable" cellist, but rather an inevitable *musician*, and that almost any instrument would have said for him what the cello does. True, it is he himself and not the instrument that transports us.

I recalled that at Perpignan the French felt slighted because he had not chosen one of their composers to "star" in the festival. He grunted with satisfaction, as if he enjoyed remembering that he had made them eat three Germans. "I admire Berlioz", he said. Alas, admiration is not

(Continued on page 174)

Chicago's flourishing free-lance opera

CHICAGO

THERE WAS a time—just a few short seasons ago—when singers who were not, or who had not at one time been, on the roster of the Metropolitan, were nonentities to all but a small segment of the American opera-going public. This is no longer true. The flood of European-made complete opera recordings which have appeared on the market in the past few years has acquainted the public with many singers who have not appeared at the Metropolitan and, in some cases, never will. A singer's contract with a major recording company soon enough proves his or her worth, whereas an affiliation with a major opera company merely *implies* it. The public, familiar with these recorded performances, does not hesitate to purchase tickets to hear these same singers repeat their roles in public. This is especially true for audiences outside New York who must depend more heavily on records and radio for their musical feasts than the overfed New Yorker.

As a result, many of today's leading opera stars are assuming the status of free-lance artists. They travel from country to country and sing with this company and that, making guest appearances and fulfilling limited engagements. This increased internationalism has made it possible for such an organization as the Lyric Opera of Chicago not only to exist but to flourish. But it, and similiar organizations, are opera companies which are *not* opera companies. They are merely the skeletons of opera companies. The flesh and blood of these organizations consists of stars of the caliber of Eileen Farrell, Birgit Nilsson, Leonie Rysanek, Giulietta Simionato, Jussi Bjoerling, and Boris Christoff.

In a short annual season a company such as the Chicago one cannot attempt to create a full-fledged repertory company. It would be impossible. Instead, they assemble an orchestra and a chorus (which, of necessity, vary from year to year in both personnel and quality) and other basic elements of an opera troupe and fill important roles with experienced singers who have perfected their roles elsewhere. This system has shown itself to be effective. It can, and often does, lead to exciting performances of individual works.

This is not to imply that the task of such an organization as the Lyric Opera is an easy one or that its performances depend solely on star-studded casts. In many ways the achievement of real excellence under their circumstances shows an astute understanding of the essentials and non-essentials of opera. In some respects they have achieved results which other com-



Renata Tebaldi and Giuseppe di Stefano in the Lyric Opera's "Butterfly"

As time permits, the author is a peripatetic opera buff. Otherwise, he is second in command of the Fifty-Eighth Street Music Library in New York City.

By GEORGE LOUIS MAYER



Birgit Nilsson as Turandot

panies, hallowed by years of service, could well emulate. All of their works are obviously well rehearsed and painstakingly prepared. The fact that they do two or three performances of a work in a season does not mean that it can be any less carefully prepared than it would be if they were scheduling twenty. Foremost among their best qualities is the high standard of conducting which they have attained and maintained. The management wisely realizes that opera begins with a fine conductor. And they have substantiated their premise with an imposing roster, which this year is made up of Tullio Serafin, Georges Sebastian, Kiril Kondrashin, Artur Rodzinski, and Lee Schaenen. The curse of routine, which dulls the edge of any opera performance, is avoided by the presence of such men. Results may be variable, but they never become lifeless.

Both "*Turandot*" and "*Il Trovatore*" demand first-rate conductors. Serafin's conducting of the Puccini was masterful in every respect. Schaenen's conducting of the Verdi was not. They both knew what they wanted but only Serafin got it. Of course, the Italian maestro has been acknowledged a great conductor for decades—he conducted the Metropolitan's first "*Turandot*" in 1926—whereas Schaemen is relative newcomer. But the contrasts in their art were not merely a matter of experience. Flexibility made the difference. Serafin has the uncanny knack of gearing his performances to the individual talents of the cast with which he is working. He allows the singers all the leeway they need to achieve best effects, so long as they do not attempt to exceed decorum or violate good musical sense. Yet as a whole his performances invariably have the effect of unity and precision. Schaenen, on the other hand, apparently insists that singers performing under his baton conform to his own preconceived notions as to how the score should sound whether they can perform at their best under these circumstances or not. Many of his tempi were much too fast. This resulted in chaos, of course, and several scenes were thereby ruined. And climaxes were so noisy that even such powerful singers as Simionato and Bastianini were consistently drowned out by the sheer mass of orchestral sound. This young conductor, a protégé of Herbert von Karajan, is obviously talented. He prevented the treacherous Verdi score from sounding any more old-fashioned and weak than necessary. He achieved intensity without loss of clarity (in the pit) and kept the performance moving and alive. He still needs to learn the devious methods of approximating these same good effects without sacrificing the proceedings on stage. Overenthusiasm on the part of a conductor can ruin a performance just as surely as no enthusiasm at all.

The casting of a singer renowned for her Isolde in the role of Turandot is an uncommon and unexpected occurrence. But the Norwegian soprano Birgit Nilsson, who is singing both in Chicago this fall, is far removed from the stereotyped image of a Wagnerian soprano. She is a handsome woman and she conducts herself with imposing majesty on stage. The fact that she looked well in an all-white costume (in the last act of "*Turandot*") was proof of the suitability of her dimensions, for large girls just cannot create a good impression in white unless they are ex-

(*Continued from page 172*)

BOOK REVIEW

THIS BOOK is the first of a set of four. The next, by the same author, is titled *Late Renaissance and Baroque Music* (*c.1525-c.1750*), and the remaining two, both by Wilfred Mellers, are *The Sonata Principle* (*from c.1750*), and *Romanticism and the 20th Century* (*from 1800*). In his preface, Harman sets forth the three principles which have been followed in the writing of this series. The first has been an attempt

> to convey something of the feelings aroused in us by the music we write about and to give as many aesthetic judgements on individual works and composers as is possible in a work of this size and scope, for although we realize that such feelings and judgements are purely personal and that therefore it is hardly likely that everyone will agree with them, we believe that a history which does not seek to arouse a critical enthusiasm for each and every period and in which there are few or no aesthetic judgements to guide the taste of those less familiar with the music in question is not fulfilling one of its functions. (p.ix)

The second aim was

> to write a history that would be of use in both schools and universities. . .(*ibid*)

And finally, the third ideal, using the words of *The New Oxford History of Music*, was to

> 'present music not as an isolated phenomenon or the work of a few outstanding composers, but as an art developing in constant association with every form of human culture and activity.'

Any fair evaluation of the book must be made on the basis of how it has met its criteria.

Medieval and Early Renaissance Music (up to c. 1525), *by Alec Harman* (Vol. I of the series *Man and His Music, The Story of Musical Experience in the West*). Essential Books, Fairlawn, N. J., 1958, xii, 268 pp., $7.00.

To take these aims out of order, the third is perhaps the most commendable. There is all too little appreciation of music within its historical and cultural context, both by musicians, who often lack a sense of history, and by historians, who often neglect or are unaware of music as one of the many revealing sources of insight into the aesthetic expression of a period. It is a healthy thing, therefore, for a book to attempt to fill this need. Harman's efforts in this direction are a bit disappointing. The sections with this "integrating" approach are brief and often give the impression that the writer had remembered at the last minute that he ought to include something of the kind. Perhaps this is unavoidable in a book of this brevity. And while he has little on the early Middle Ages, for the later centuries he does include a number of valuable cultural allusions.

Nor is he exempt from inaccuracy. I cannot imagine where he got the idea that John of Luxemburg, King of Bohemia, was a brother of Pope John XXII, as he states on p.130. His knowledge of history weakens his attempt to explain why Italy "took comparatively little part" in the explorations and discoveries of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, which he suggests "was probably due to her geographical position, for her only exit to the east or west was through the narrow and treacherous. . .Straits of Gibraltar" (p. 233). The most satisfactory explanation is much simpler: the maritime interests of Italy were all tied up in the trade of the Levant, and either the opening up of new routes to the East, or the discovery of new lands to the West, was antithetical or irrelevant to these interests. His knowledge of Greek is obviously vicarious, judging from his writing of the Greek word for "voice" or "sound" (*phoné*) as *phonys* (p.8). More serious, the like may be said of his Latin, considering his borrowed translations, most grotesquely his use of an

anachronistic 17th-century English translation of a medieval passage (p.69). Such criticisms are probably picayune, and fortunately they are only minor criticisms: the over-all validity of Harman's aims remains even if his fulfillment of them is inevitably less than complete.

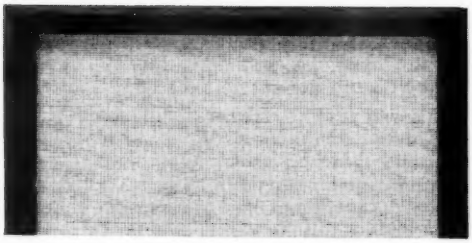
The first aim also is somewhat unusual, though certainly useful. (I can still remember the overly objective approach to which I became accustomed in my callow youth, and then the horror I felt when I found that a work like Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or Schubert's "Great" C Major actually could be subject to criticism by mere mortals.) In general, Harman's evaluations are in good taste, unobtrusive and yet not foisted off as fact rather than opinion. Many of these are, indeed, quite penetrating, and show perception as well as imagination. His evaluation of 14th-century music in comparison with that of the 13th-century as generally lacking variety and balance may seem a bit bold at first, but it is fairly and soundly presented (p.179-80). And his interpretation of why Italy was less of a leader in Renaissance music while in the forefront of Renaissance culture otherwise is stimulating enough, for all its glibness, to bear full quotation as a sample of Harman's opinions:

> The striking difference between the predominance of music in northern Europe and the predominance of the fine arts, literature, and science (such as it was) in Italy is explained by the fact. . .that the Renaissance, which grew more quickly and blossomed more richly in Italian soil than anywhere else, was primarily concerned with a reality based on the close observance of man and his world, the forms, colours, and details of which are readily and naturally transmitted to canvas or stone, or described in words. But realism is fundamentally foreign to music which, in its essence, is abstract and incapable of conveying exact images, or feelings. To rejoice the ear by sheer sonority, or by weaving melody with melody into a simple or complex web of sound, yes; to express a general mood or feeling, yes; to satisfy the intellect through simple forms or delight it with structural subtlety, yes; but to portay precisely physical objects, mental concepts, or emotional states, no. The abstract mysticism and universality of outlook of the Middle Ages found music a perfect means of expression, but only in certain limited respects, some of them naive, was the primary attitude of the Renaissance reflected in the works of her composers. (pp.226-7)

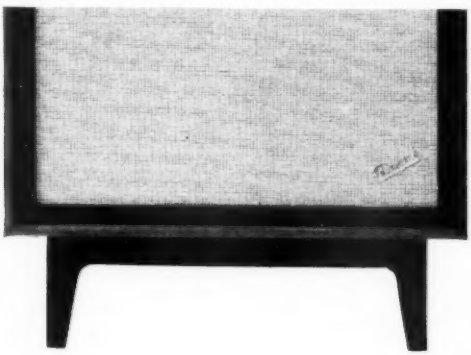
The second aim, however, is undoubtedly the real *raison d'être* of the series. This book is plainly intended as primarily a textbook. For all the author's little opinions in passing, he has no real thesis and wishes merely to present a coherent picture of musical development, in context, for students. The level in English schools to which he specifically addresses himself (p.ix) would correspond roughly in the United States to the upper years of secondary school and early college. It is unlikely that the average American student on this level would have the background to understand much of the book, and even many music majors on the same level might find it rough going at times. But this does not destroy its value, at least for more advanced students.

For it is in its aim as a textbook that this volume is most successful, since it achieves what should be the basic goal of all such works: lucidity. To be sure, Harman's style does not always contribute to this: he occasionally writes rather overpacked sentences that require several readings for full untanglement; and he even slips, at least twice, into slang ("a flash in the pan", p.112, and "set the ball rolling", p.217). But generally he expresses himself clearly and directly. A more important lucidity, however, is that of organization. He avoids falling into the morass of too many musical illustrations and discussions of every branch and aspect of a subject in detail, which often makes more technical and extensive books on the subject such formidable reading for the partially or totally uninitiated. Instead, he uses a modest number of very wisely chosen musical examples (with suggestions in addition for their performance—since personal music-making is a far better way of coming to know music than descriptions or printed staves) and juxtaposes them and his specific details with careful explanations of only the basic principles and lines of development

(*Continued on page 219*)



IS HALF ENOUGH? How small can a speaker system be? That depends on your standards of musical quality. Certainly a small enclosure is desirable in many living rooms—but there is a point of diminishing returns at which you must make a choice between compactness of the cabinet and quality of the sound. The laws of physics are stubborn—and so are music-listeners who insist on musical realism! That is why the Bozaks are built to standards of maximum quality, not minimum cubage—let the chips fall where they may! The R. T. Bozak Sales Co., Darien, Conn.



FROM THE EDITOR:

A LOW BOW to Leopold Stokowski for intimidating the posh audience at his 50th anniversary concert in behalf of living composers. Stoky urged everyone in jam-packed Carnegie Hall to support the Contemporary Music Society, one of the earnest aims of which is to record those many important modern works that could not be expected to arrest the attention of profit-conscious labels. Those who want to know more about this Society should write to its Secretary, Ralph Backlund, at 545 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y. . .Straussians will be pleased to hear that "*Capriccio*" is due on Angel in January. The next month will bring Poulenc's "*Les Dialogues des Carmelites*" on the same label. The Capitol-EMI "*Simon Boccanegra*" will be reviewed here in December by Robert Sabin, who is preparing also an article on "*Wozzeck*" in connection with the forthcoming Metropolitan production. Dare we hope that this will be recorded?. . .Doubtless many of you noticed the ingenious Harman-Kardon advertisement showing the members of the National String Quartet. The violist in this group—the second from the left—is our own Max Serbin. . .I think that Margaret Carson, the astute lady who is currently publicist for the American Ballet Theatre, had a stroke of genius when she arranged for box office purchases to be chargeable via The Diners' Club. The same privilege would be a boon to peripatetic record collectors. . . I am wondering about the recording future of the New York City Ballet Orchestra now that Leon Barzin has removed to Paris. His successor, Robert Irving, is under contract to EMI. . .The Haydn Society called off its scheduled Berwald symphonies, but the remainder still holds plenty of promise, especially for lovers of the baroque: concertos for oboe (J. C. Bach, Bellini), flute and oboe (Salieri), English horn (Donizetti), two horns (Rosetti), clarinet (also Rosetti), bass and viola (Dittersdorf), and numerous off-beat works by Rossini, Cherubini, Ruggieri, Valentino, and Brunetti. Who says there is no more repertory to record?. . .By the way, HS is readying a sequel to its "Masterpieces of Music before 1750". Like that superb anthology, this one will be made up of works covered intensively in a similarly entitled W. W. Norton book. The collateral reading this time is *A Treasury of Early Music* by Carl Parrish. The corresponding record album will be available in both mono and stereo. . . Speaking of books, I commend everyone to the notice on page 173. Three massive tomes for $12.50 is hard to beat, particularly when they are so uniquely indispensable. I cannot imagine a more welcome Christmas present, either for a collector-friend or yourself. . . Of course, there is no accounting for tastes, and possibly you would be more interested in one or another of those gifts "for the man who has everything", as the saying goes. For example, I nominate for the *ne plus ultra* in stereo madness a device called the Stereophonic Listening Chair. I quote from the blurb: "Maximum advantage of the amazing stereophonic effect is to be had when the speakers are close to the ears. The Stereophonic Listening Chair accomplishes this new miracle of sound and literally transports the listener back to the point in the concert hall from which the recordings were made." The accompanying photo shows what *looks* like any old-fashioned "wing" chair, the only apparent difference being that the "wings" are rather prominent. I guess they have to be to hold the speakers. Anyway, I hope the thing is well insulated. What a way to die! If you think I am making all this up, see page 85 of the current Mooney-Rowan tape catalogue. Or write for a brochure: Stereo Products Co., Severna Park, Md. About the only advantage I can see in owning one of these monsters is that you would never have to wonder whether or not you were sitting in the middle. But it seems to me that a slight list to port or starboard could raise hell with an eardrum. —J.L.

(Continued from page 167)

ceptionally well-proportioned. Nilsson looked ravishing. Vocally, the very thing which, at this stage of her career, makes her an atypical Wagnerian suits her for the demanding Puccini role. It is the freedom, brilliance, and beauty of her top voice which sets Nilsson apart. The exasperatingly high tessitura of the role of Turandot obviously held no terrors for her. She began *In questa reggia* with the kind of poise and assurance which made it perfectly clear that the role was easily within the scope of her voice. It was. High B's and C's were sent straight to the back wall of the auditorium without a trace of a wobble or insecurity of any kind. Nor did she tire. She allowed herself little reserve (which Turandot could?) but there was no sense of strain or vocal fatigue at the end of the evening. Consequently, she was free to give her characterization of the role the attention it demands without having to relax her interpretation for purely vocal considerations. She is not a particularly inventive actress, but she went through the conventional gestures and attitudes with impressive conviction. She was both haughty and ferocious without appearing ridiculous. And she accomplished the quick and complete change of character in the last act with both vocal and dramatic success. Those who know her voice only from her first recording (which Angel has just issued) are entitled to their doubts about her abilities, for it must be admitted that the recording lacks real distinction. It is, however, not characteristic of her stage performances of the past year or so. She has acquired a much firmer grip on her assets and freed herself of many flaws since that recording was made. True, it is unlikely that she will be able to continue singing such roles as Turandot for many more years. Already the voice shows signs of getting richer and more expressive in the middle and lower ranges than it once was. In short, the voice is becoming more suitable for Wagner than it was even a short time ago. This is not to suggest that the top shows signs of weakness. To the contrary, the voice shows marks of great durability from top to bottom, but it is developing all the time. There seems little doubt that she will become a, if not *the*, leading Wagnerian soprano of the next decade or two.

Di Stefano was in good voice for the "*Turandot*". He has attempted so many roles ill-suited to his basically lyric instrument in the past few seasons that he has now arrived at the stage where he sounds best in a role such as Calaf. Lyric roles now show his weaknesses all too prominently, whereas the more heroic ones

(Continued on page 214)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA COMPANY

JULIUS RUDEL, GENERAL DIRECTOR

Sat. Mat., Nov. 1	**LA CENERENTOLA** Rossini (in Italian)	Sun. Eve., Nov. 9	**DIE FLEDERMAUS** J. Strauss (English version by Ruth & Thomas Martin)
Sat. Eve., Nov. 1	**DIE FLEDERMAUS** J. Strauss (English version by Ruth & Thomas Martin)	Wed. Eve., Nov. 12	**TURANDOT** Puccini (in Italian)
Sun. Mat., Nov. 2	**LA BOHEME** Puccini (in Italian)	*Thurs. Eve., Nov. 13	**THE SILENT WOMAN** R. Strauss (in English)
Sun. Eve., Nov. 2	**SUSANNAH** Floyd (in English)	Fri. Eve., Nov. 14	**SUSANNAH** Floyd (in English)
Fri. Eve., Nov. 7	**LA TRAVIATA** Verdi (in Italian)	Sat. Mat., Nov. 15	**MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Puccini (in Italian)
Sat. Mat., Nov. 8	**CARMEN** Bizet (in French)	Sat. Eve., Nov. 15	**LA TRAVIATA** Verdi (in Italian)
Sat. Eve., Nov. 8	**THE MERRY WIDOW** Lehar (in English)	Sun. Mat., Nov. 16	**THE MERRY WIDOW** Lehar (in English)
Sun. Mat., Nov. 9	**MADAMA BUTTERFLY** Puccini (in Italian)	Sun. Eve., Nov. 16	**LA BOHEME** Puccini (in Italian)

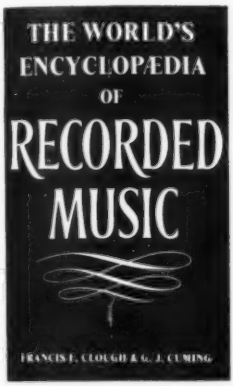
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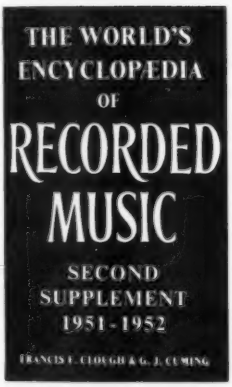
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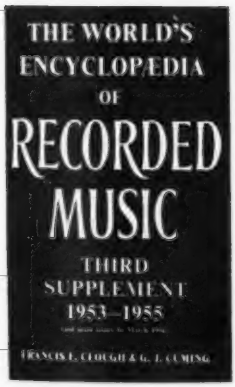
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(Continued from page 165)

love! He did not utter this thought but I read it in his eyes, which are marvelously expressive. I had never seen them so bright and blue before, but never before, either, had I seen him without his glasses. Casals smoked his pipe all the time I was present, assuredly against the advice of his doctors. But an octogenarian with a sick heart who has the courage to marry a young girl has the courage to defy doctors, indeed anyone.

(Incidentally, here is the story of why he married, told me by a close friend of his. Casals had been ailing for years. Martita, a favored student, took to nursing him, but her constant presence in the house scandalized friends and neighbors and Martita, who is a sensitive, God-fearing person, was hurt by what they had to say. She decided to enter a convent. Casals then offered marriage to spare her feelings and save her reputation, and now she performs her service of love, her act of charity, within the religion of wedlock.)

As Martita arranged chairs for us facing the door, I asked her whether she still played the cello and she replied ruefully: "There are so many things to take care of." She speaks English very well and I asked her how it happened. "I lived in New York for a time as a student at Marymount", she told me. "I used to love to watch the snow in Central Park." A wistful thought for one who lives in the drenching sunlight of Puerto Rico! Meanwhile, Casals wandered to the door and seemed to be reading something in the sky. His home in Calle Bucaré is near the airport. A plane was flying overhead. "That is what I don't like about our place", he said, "always those noises, night and day." Drawing a deep breath, he seated himself in the arm-chair and I sat to one side. Gone now were the high spirits of pre-festival days. Today he was at peace with himself, reflecting aloud: "A recording of the first rehearsal (at which he took sick) was made and one can hear the fact of illness. . . .I didn't rehearse it, just conducted. . . .I especially wanted this festival to be a sucess—for Puerto Rico." Only those who were there at the time can imagine how the Puerto Ricans were depending on that success, so that besides the pain of illness Casals suffered the mortification of not being able to help a cherished and troubled friend. "In Puerto Rico I can do what I like, as I can in France." He began to muse on the political situation. Germany had just turned down Eisenhower's offer of short-range missiles, much to Casals' satisfaction. "Anything is preferable to war, even communism," he said. A surprising statement from one who has so often disavowed the Soviets. In fact his remark about doing and saying what he liked in France and Puerto Rico was intended as a criticism of the Russian way, which he explained when he replied to a question of mine about which side he preferred. "One is a communist or capitalist according to choice. I chose capitalism because I have personal freedom . . .As in Puerto Rico, everyone is free. . . Do you know Governor Muñoz? He and his wife come to visit often. Wonderful people, simple and natural. . .democratic types." His pipe had gone out and he relit it. "But you must not think", he said with a start, "that the Russians don't love me. They do, in spite of what I say about them. They publish books about me and send presents. . . .And to think that in my own country (Spain) my name may not be mentioned!"

"What kind of presents do the Russians send you?"

"Books. . . .In Paris at the time of the *Hommage* on my eightieth birthday, a group of Russian musicians presented me with a carafe and drinking glasses, silver and gold."

"The Americans love you too."

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed, rearing his pipe on high, as if this were not a matter for wonder, which the love of the Russians is. But he knows that it is to his artistry that they respond and he was prepared to return the compliment: "The Russians are gifted. They win all the prizes at the international competitions."

"And your own country", I asked, "how do they stand musically? What about the orchestra you had in Spain? Does it still function?"

"It works. About fifty per cent of my musicians are playing, but the orchestra

has degenerated." I told him that I considered his conducting as remarkable as his playing of the cello. He did not deny this praise; he explained it: "I conducted my own Spanish orchestra for eighteen years." This statement may be construed to mean that Casals considers hard work the better part of genius and that if he plays Bach each morning as "a kind of grace", he thanks God for the opportunities to work and work successfully, for it would be an evil thing to treat one's gifts as if they were not worth some sweat.

Casals wished to discuss France, but being a gracious man he made me talk first about the tour that brought me to Puerto Rico. Here are some of his comments on places that I mentioned: "I think Montevideo is a lovely city. It has much of the Spanish atmosphere. . . .Of course I have not visited it in perhaps twenty years and the whole world has changed. . . .I like Ecuador (where he had never been) very much. They have no dictator. . . ." As for the Inca ruins of Cuzco (which he has never visited,) "we have no idea how advanced other cultures were". . . .Though Martinique was formidably expensive, "they would not let me pay in the hotels and restaurants". . . . Where was I going next? Home, New York. He was astonished that it would take me only six or seven hours to get there. "Planes!" he cried, "People can do anything these days. . . .It used to take me so long to travel. Think of the time I could have saved."

And now he introduced the subject of France. "What a wonderful time we had", he said, knocking ashes from his pipe and looking me full in the face. But it was not today's France he was thinking about but the France of his eightieth birthday—the *Hommage*. A man so honored, why should the thought of it have been so insistent with him? Perhaps because on that occasion he had figured as composer, conductor, and cellist probably for the last time—the climax of a long career. . .and these are the days of his denouement, for even this conversation with me was in the nature of final acts—a disentangling of ideas and sentiments. But the drama of Casals' life has had a happy ending. He has married the lovely young maid. Still echoes from the past recur, ringing out in the quiet of final scenes.

"There were one hundred and twenty-five cellists!" he exclaimed—"an army of cellists!" The word "army" was well-advised. It represents not only a prodigious number of soldiers, but a battle won. Everyone knows what Casals has done for the cello. His ideas about it as a solo instrument, and also his revolutionary techniques, had won him victory after

(Continued on page 222)



Pablo Casals and his wife, Martita, in the music room of their home in Puerto Rico

Record Reviews

(including stereo)

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

J. S. BACH: *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor; Toccata and Fugue in D minor; Prelude and Fugue in A Major (S. 536).* André Marchal at the organ of Saint-Eustache, Paris, France. Westminster XWN-18720, $4.98.

(Passacaglia)	
Coci	Vox DL-210
Walcha	Dec. ARC-3021
(Toccata)	
Dupre	Over. 13
Richter	Lon. LL-174

▲CERTAINLY this is the finest performance of the Passacaglia on LP. It flows in upon you in great waves. Schweitzer might have achieved this (on Columbia ML-5042) had he been in practice and his instrument in tune. The other works are played beautifully, but the Passacaglia is worth the price of the record. The sound is excellent. —J.B.L.

•

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 7 in A, Op. 92;* Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Guido Cantelli. Angel Stereo S-35620, $5.98.

▲SOME people, obviously—that is, obviously when one notes the name of the conductor here—have been around recording stereophonically longer than we might suspect. Cantelli's certainly was a talent sorely wasted by an untimely and tragic death; his performance in this recording is simply superlative. Rhythmic, energetic, spirited—one hardly could ask for a more effective reading of this work. The sound is a bit clouded, although adequate; stereo is decidedly apparent. —P.C.P.

•

BEETHOVEN: *Octet for Winds, Op. 103; Rondino for Wind Octet, Op. Posth.; Septet for Winds, Op. 71;* New York Wind Ensemble conducted by Sam Baron. Counterpoint Stereo CPS-559, $5.95.

▲MAKE no mistake about it—the Op. 103 Octet is far from being minor Beethoven. It is a rich, deeply felt, and mature work, deserving of more popularity than it receives. Perhaps the instrumentation is a bit strange for some ears. Of course, just one mediocre performer can make the whole effect painful, and it is a rare performance in which *something* doesn't go wrong. I am happy to report that this one marks a rare occasion: the men of the New York Wind Ensemble are expert technicians. But what is more important in this case, they are artists of unusual sensitivity, and they are an ensemble in the true sense of the word. The other selections are less important than the Op. 103, but the performances are no less dedicated. Counterpoint has provided sound which is unmistakably specific as to placement of instruments—a feature I have heard mostly on tape up to this point. The recording is quite close to the instruments, and the presence is truly stunning. One defect mars an other-

wise almost perfect recording. All of the instruments, especially in their higher registers, have "bubbles," a sort of washboard sound, which is either a general engineering fault or a characteristic of my reviewing copy —D.H.M.

•

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67;* L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London Stereo CS-6037, $4.98.

SAME: Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Westminster Stereo WST-14001, $5.98.

▲HERE we go again: it looks like we'll soon have a whole shelf of Beethoven Fifths in stereo. Of these two releases, I lean to the London. Ansermet approaches Toscanini-like bristle and intensity here—energy and tension are the orders of the day. While I would have liked to have heard some of the gentler moments of the score treated a little more lovingly, I can really bring no complaint against this reading. Rodzinski's performance seems to me tired-sounding. The perfunctory manner here displayed is certainly a contrast to the electricity of Ansermet's version. Westminster's orchestral colors are quite subdued and mellow in contrast to the big, brassy sound Ansermet elicits from his orchestra. Engineering wise these recordings are pretty much tied for honors, although the Westminster sound is a slight bit cleaner and less edgy than the London; stereo adds power, weight, and clarity to both recordings. —P.C.P.

•

BEETHOVEN: *Trio in E flat, Op. 1, No. 1; Trio in D, Op. 70, No. 1 ("Ghost");* Eugene Istomin (piano); Joseph Fuchs (violin); Pablo Casals (cello). Columbia ML-5291, $3.98.

▲IMPERFECTION is not always a blemish; this performance, which is rugged and strong-willed, is no model of slickly veneered perfection. But it is, first and foremost, tremendously musical—which has very little to do with the fact that both Fuchs and Casals play flat now and then. This small moral concerning perfection *vs.* meaningfulness is further brought home by Casals in the second movement of the Op. 70, in which he sometimes sacrifices tone—deliberately, I am sure—for the sake of the pervading color of the movement, and the result is one of the most chillingly ghostly pieces of music you are likely to encounter anywhere. This movement also reveals the two string players at the peak of their capacities, Casals during his high-scored passages early in the movement and Fuchs later on, when the violin seems literally to weep out of the depths of some unexplained but vividly conceived torment. We come finally to Istomin's role here, and mere high praise is not high enough. He is the backbone and the guiding force of the ensemble; his unerring musicianship and execution shine like a beacon through the various textures of the ensemble, and his playing lends stature to even the simplest ideas in the Op. 1. For all its small shortcomings, here is a record to be grateful for. —S.F.

•

BERLIOZ: *Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14;* Paris Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Ataulfo Argenta. London Stereo CS-6025, $4.98.

SAME: Cento Soli Orchestra conducted by Louis Fourestier. Omega Stereo OSL-9, $5.95.

▲OF these two performances Argenta's is the more lively and exciting. He mixes in a liberal dosage of passion and expressiveness—something that cannot be said for Fourestier's reading. Neither version holds much of a dramatic punch, but, again, Argenta's is the better on this score. Both orchestras perform with virtuosity, but the Cento Soli group shows such a lack of spirit that its recording has little musical interest. London's sound is the cleaner; Omega's is quite coarse and rough in spots. The biggest, boomiest (even on my no-boom woofers) bass drum I've ever heard makes itself felt (and I do mean felt) in the *March to the Scaffold* movement of the Omega version; hi-fiers will no doubt delight in this. Its counterpart on the London disc is less spectacular, but more true to life. London's stereo is the more spacious. In short, it looks like a clean sweep for Argenta and London. —P.C.P.

Barber's 'Vanessa'

A Guest Review

By RAYMOND ERICSON

Managing Editor, *Musical America*

WHATEVER judgment the future may place on Samuel Barber's "*Vanessa*", its immediate, newsworthy background virtually demanded that it be recorded, and by a company of RCA Victor's status. To recapitulate as briefly as possible the facts about it:

"*Vanessa*" was given its première on January 15th, 1958, by the Metropolitan Opera Association—the first American opera deemed worthy of presentation by Rudolf Bing during his management of the Company, the first American opera staged by the company since 1947 (Bernard Rogers' one-act "*The Warrior*"), and the first full-length American opera staged by the company since 1934 (Howard Hanson's "*Merry Mount*"). The work represented a first attempt at opera by a leading American composer, and he had in his librettist, Gian-Carlo Menotti, a celebrated opera composer in his own right. The Metropolitan planned a lavish, elegant production with a select cast directed by Menotti. Advance public interest was heavy; audience reaction to the première was favorable; critical praise was generous enough to suggest that native pride colored the judgments. In the spring, the opera won for its composer the 1958 Pulitzer Prize in music. In the summer the Metropolitan production (still in English) was taken virtually intact to Salzburg, to become the first American opera to be given in the sanctified festival there. Critical denunciation in the Austrian and German press was hostile enough to suggest that the judgments had been colored by pique over American rejection of operas by Rolf Liebermann and Gottfried von Einem. (After the Metropolitan première, one American critic looked into his clouded crystal ball and wrote: "Mr. Barber's mastery of the operatic language is. . .second to none now active on the Salzburg-Milan axis. . .This will be an eye-opener for Europeans. . .") As of this writing, "*Vanessa*" faces the crucial test of a second season in the Metropolitan's repertory, but no future European productions are pending. More important, perhaps, is the fact that through the medium of recordings the work can be assessed by a larger audience after repeated hearings.

For a work that has aroused so much comment, "*Vanessa*" is curiously conventional in operatic terms. Menotti's book turns safely to a past era, a foreign setting, and an artificially romantic tale. In a country house in Northern Europe around 1905, Vanessa awaits the arrival of her lover, whom she has not seen for many years. The lover's son, Anatol, a likable opportunist, comes instead, and succeeds in capturing Vanessa's hand—and, presumably, a comfortable future. But before their marriage and departure to live abroad, he seduces Erika, Vanessa's niece. A prospective child is lost in a miscarriage, but Erika keeps her guilty secret from her aunt, protecting the latter's happiness. At the end, Erika, like an echo of Vanessa, prepares to wait lonely years for a lover.

Menotti decks out his plot with two colorful characters: the Old Baroness, Vanessa's mother, who sits around stonily without speaking to her daughter, and the Old Doctor, a family friend given to sentimental reminiscences. With a skill and artifice that would have been expected of him, Menotti has steered the libretto so that it moves smoothly from aria to duet to aria to a final summarizing quintet. He has provided the composer with oppor-

BARBER: "*Vanessa*"; Eleanor Steber (Vanessa); Rosalind Elias (Erika); Regina Resnik (The Old Baroness); Nicolai Gedda (Anatol); Giorgio Tozzi (The Old Doctor); George Cehanovsky (The Major-Domo); Robert Nagy (A Footman); Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. RCA Victor set LM-6138, five sides, $14.94, or Stereo set LSC-6138, $17.94.

tunities for writing offstage effects—sleigh bells, hunting horns, hymn-singing congregations—and for writing ball music and imitation folk songs. There are stagewise tableaux at the ends of acts. The whole he has clothed in language that does not sound preposterous when sung, that only occasionally goes too flat or too flossy. In the end, though, the book remains contrived and meaningless, with the characters arousing little sympathy and seeming to be manipulated from one situation to another merely for theatrical effect.

Like the libretto, the score is noncontroversial. It has a number of set pieces, including the charming pseudo folk song for the Doctor, *Under the willow tree;* a brilliant aria with considerable fioriture for Vanessa, *Our arms entwined;* a duet for Vanessa and Anatol with a fine Italianate climax, *Love has a bitter core;* an elaborate and very beautiful quintet, *à la "Meistersinger"*, for the five main characters, *To leave, to break;* and two lovely, quietly lyrical arias, *Must the winter come so soon?*, for Erika, and *For every love there is a last farewell*, for the Doctor.

Barber freely uses musical means that recall Puccini, Richard Strauss, Debussy, and other past operatic composers, but he fuses them pretty well into a stylistically unified score; the setting of the text is extremely sensitive; the orchestral coloring is tastefully rich. The mood is generally bittersweet, and the music is best when the characters are sadly contemplative. The final scene avoids the musical emptiness in many measures of the rest of the opera, and it is almost continuously inspired, from the Intermezzo that precedes it (it has already turned up on concert programs) to the final, superb Quintet. If the musical style does not go against the listener's taste, he will probably find the score more attractive with each hearing. If the score is not strong enough to carry the opera into an enduring career, it does fall prettily, often movingly, on the ear.

The recording of *"Vanessa"* was made, of course, by the same artists who took part in the Metropolitan première. To one who has seen the production in performance, it is hard to separate the recorded sound from the remembered sight (especially in stereo). But in a few ways the recording has advantages: Eleanor Steber played the part of Vanessa too heavily in gesture and movement, but judged solely on the basis of her singing of her difficult music, she is quite triumphant. The tone is not always pure, but more often than not it is ravishing, and she handles the high tessitura and intricate fioriture smoothly. Oddly enough, in a few instances Barber allows the orchestra in the opera house to overwhelm a singer's phrases; this is easily rectified by the recording engineer. Finally, the record listener is spared (as in other operas on discs) the applause that greets vocal climaxes and kills the quiet passages that immediately follow.

The meaty role of Erika gave Rosalind Elias, a gifted young American mezzo-soprano, the opportunity of her career at the Metropolitan, and she seized it in no uncertain terms. Hers was the performance that most impressed the Salzburg audience and critics after the opera's European première. Her rich, dark voice and communicative singing as the tormented girl come through eloquently here.

Vocal handsomeness, musicianly style, and strikingly clear diction mark Nicolai Gedda's singing as Anatol. Giorgio Tozzi's sympathetic characterization of the sentimental Old Doctor is suggested by the warmth of his voice and manner, but one misses the visual element of his drunken scene, in which he brought conviction and humor to a bit that could easily have been embarrassing. With few lines to sing, the Old Baroness becomes an unimportant figure on the recording. Onstage, she is a dominating, if usually silent figure, particularly as played by Regina Resnik.

The conducting by Dimitri Mitropoulos brings out all the virtuosic orchestral comment on the dramatic situations; it makes the most of the music's quiet lyricism and soaring climaxes with equal intensity, and the Metropolitan orchestra shows how good an ensemble it can be in its performance of Barber's tricky score. The recorded sound is excellent throughout.

RCA Victor apparently was at a loss about what to do with side six of this set.

(Continued on page 217)

BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 15;* Leon Fleisher (piano) with the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by George Szell. Epic LC-3484, $3.98, or Stereo BC-1003, $5.98.

Backhaus, Böhm ..... London LL-911
Rubinstein, Reiner ..... Victor LM-1831
Serkin, Szell ..... Columbia ML-4829

▲THIS is a powerful performance, exciting and well-controlled. It also has a special interest, for this concerto was one of the two which Fleisher had to play during the Queen Elizabeth of Belgium International Music Competition at Brussels in 1952. He won first prize in this important contest. On the whole, this interpretation can stand up to any of those listed above. In fact, the rapport between soloist and conductor is perhaps even greater here than in any other available version; Szell's handling of the orchestra, the sound he evokes, and the unified concept between the two musicians are all truly remarkable—and, mind you, this is a very different performance indeed from the more frenetic Serkin collaboration. Fleisher's artistry is extremely impressive. To mention his technical facility would be almost beside the point with regard to the D minor Concerto: it is a very difficult work, and the young pianist overcomes all the obstacles with considerable ease. Interpretatively, he is best in the lovely slow movement, which is performed here with exceptional insight and great sensitivity, and in the fiery finale. The first movement somehow is a little less successful, for I feel missing the more mature approach, the grandeur of, for example, Solomon's massive interpretation with Kubelik (Victor LHMV-1042, which is by now unfortunately deleted). The sound in the Epic recording is good, (not especially more so in stereo) although I would have preferred Fleisher's piano to sound less clattery in the upper registers; his tone in the more dynamic moments has a tendency to become unpleasantly hard. Nevertheless, as an example of a fine young pianist's unique abilities and growing maturity this record will be of tremendous interest. It is also a performance which should satisfy anyone.

—I.K.

BRITTEN: *Matinées Musicales; Soirées Musicales;* Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster Stereo WST-14011, $5.98.

▲THESE Rossini-Britten collaborations make light and easy listening. Boult has contributed to this lightness of mood with sprightly and zestful performances. The sound is good, although the strings I found a bit edgy; the stereo is exciting.—P.C.P.

●

CHOPIN: *Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11;* Geza Anda (pianist) with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Alceo Galliera. Angel 35631, $4.98 or $3.98.

▲THE first time I heard Geza Anda, I believe, was on an early Decca LP, now long deleted, of the *Symphonic Variations.* I was impressed then with this pianist's smooth technique and sensitivity to subtle tonal hues. He retained these qualities on subsequent releases, and is now beginning to achieve a maturity and stylistic insight which are unusual even among our most noted artists. I must admit that this has always been one of my favorite concerti—for sheer lyric beauty it has few peers. Anda's performance of it is, for me, one of those rare revelations of the inner soul of a composition; it leaves one practically breathless from beginning to end. His style is free, but never in bad taste. His tone combines clarity of enunciation with warmth. Complain, if you must, that some of his tempi are too leisurely. I have to admit that the final movement, marked *Vivace,* is somewhat less than that here. But Anda achieves a wistfulness which I feel is inherent in the music itself. I would not be fair if I did not mention Galliera's conducting, which is a model of the art of accompaniment. The recording is excellent as to piano sound, but the balance is in favor of the orchestra. —D.H.M.

●

DEBUSSY: *La Mer; Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune;* **RAVEL:** *Rapsodie espagnole;* L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London Stereo CS-6024, $4.98.

▲ANSERMET's *La Mer* is not atmospheric enough. There is perhaps just a

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little too much brightness—too much clarity of detail, not enough spray mist—to suit the true spirit of the music. This same observation holds for the *Afternoon of a Faun* and the Ravel *Rhapsody*, although the effectiveness of these pieces does not suffer quite so much. London's sound, similarly, is overly bright and unsympathetic to this sort of music. Everything is a little too sharply focused—the shimmering impressionistic haze is blown away. The stereo, as indicated, is quite effective here—almost too effective with its clarity-producing ways. —P.C.P.

●

DVOŘÁK: *Serenade in D minor, Op. 44;* Boston Woodwind Ensemble, Samuel Mayes (cello), and George Moleux (double bass) conducted by Eric Simon. Boston Stereo BST-1004, $5.95.

▲THIS unassuming *Serenade* fares best with a similarly unpretentious performance. Such it receives here. All is handled lightly and gracefully, never for a moment overbearing or ponderous. I would have preferred somewhat deader, drier acoustics; the sound is perhaps too reverberant—too "juicy"—to suit the best interests of this essentially intimate-style music. Otherwise there can be no complaint with the sound, which is really quite clean and spacious. There is not much music per side—nine and sixteen minutes, respectively. I doubt that engineering considerations dictated such a conservative groove spacing. —P.C.P.

●

FOSS: *Psalms; Behold! I Build an House;* **SHIFRIN:** *Serenade for Five Instruments;* James MacInnes, Lukas Foss (pianists) with the Roger Wagner Chorale conducted by Roger Wagner; Melvin Kaplan (oboe); Charles Russo (clarinet); Robert Cecil (horn); Ynez Lynch (viola); Harriet Wingreen (piano). Composers Recordings CRI-123, $4.98.

▲THE third of the CRI recordings sponsored by the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters is a worthy but rather curious affair. Foss' *Psalms* do not register in the version used here in place of the orchestral background, with its stimulating plectral and pungent instrumentation. It may be that I am prejudiced, having discussed the work with Foss in its scoring stages, and recalling the effect when the New York Philharmonic performed it. Whatever the reason, it lacks in this arrangement the power that is sonorously within it. The other Foss work is good, points up the fact that Foss has erased any national characteristics that marked some of his early work and also that he has disowned the Copland influence. Within the fluid writing it will be observed that the formal pretensions and objectives do not mark a full retreat into strict formalism. Foss is a present-day romanticist, no matter the classic adaptations. Shifrin is a newcomer to the recording scene. His music may fool one the first time around, for it may be considered twelve-tone or (excuse the impossible term) atonal. It is neither, for it is tonal; that is, in the hybrid sense of today's definition of tonality. The dodecaphonic element floats around the work because Shifrin disposes his sounds in a Webernian manner—fragmentation is the point of departure, and the music shows this composer walking along duplex paths. He digs back for the pithiness of the twelve-tone school and spades forward with the aid of balanced structure. The best part of the three-movement piece is the final section, a contemporary "touch" piece. The performance sounds good, and the engineering is most satisfactory, here and on the overside also. —A.C.

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GERSHWIN: *Concerto in F, Rhapsody in Blue;* Eugene List (piano), Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra conducted by Howard Hanson. Mercury Stereo SR-90002, $5.95.

▲THIS pair of more-than-acceptable performances was reviewed by E. J. in the December 1957 ARG. The subtle differences—ones of transparency and over-all sheen—between this stereodisc version of the *Rhapsody* and its tape counterpart (Mercury MWS5-47) will not be noticed on any but the finest stereo systems. This pressing exhibits qualities which make it a truly remarkable feat of engineering: quiet surfaces, extraordinarily high re-

corded level, excellent stereo, and a general cleanness of sound that approaches that of tape. I hope that this is a representative sample of what Mercury can do with stereo on disc. —P.C.P.

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GRIEG: *Holberg Suite, Op. 40; Two Elegiac Melodies, Op. 34 (Heart Wounds; The Last Spring); Symphonic Dance No. 4, Op. 64;* Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. Capitol-EMI G-7104, $4.98.

(Holberg Suite)
Münchinger ..... London LL-1685
Remoortel ..... Vox 9840
(Elegiac Melodies)
Barbirolli ..... Mercury 50164
Remoortel ..... Vox 10330
(Symphonic Dances, Op. 64)
Barbirolli ..... Mercury 50164
Remoortel ..... Vox 10330

▲AS may be seen by the above list of recommended performances there are at least two versions of the works contained in this collection that should be considered by the prospective purchaser in addition to the present release. In each case any of those listed is preferable to the disc at hand. Fistoulari's are adequate, even good interpretations, but the sense of style—the haunting and tender qualities—is simply not there. The strings play well but without the glow that Remoortel or Münchinger elicits. The smaller group in the London recording, as against what sounds like the full strings of the Philharmonia, achieves a much more delicate chamber quality. Fistoulari's readings could have benefited considerably from a more imaginative approach in this music. The recording is somewhat shrill unless compensated for. —I.K.

A perfect reading of a genuine masterpiece

E. HALFFTER: *Sinfonietta;* Orquesta Nacional de España conducted by Ataulfo Argenta. London LL-3024, $3.98.

▲LONDON'S splendid series, "The Music of Spain," reaches its eleventh volume with this release. Argenta is of course no longer among the living, and no better proof of the great loss the musical world has suffered can be brought forward than this magnificent, this perfect reading of a genuine masterpiece. Ernesto Halffter's *Sinfonietta* is in four long movements, and the generic title can be explained by the fact that development of thematic material is minor to the total design. The contrast of subjects, the re-coloring and slight changes of these plus additional material, doubtless was considered by the composer to be of less than full symphonic scope. Be that as it may, the composition contains all the elements that make for Spanish music. The orchestral colors are employed as exploratory references to the themes—a means of transubstantiation by which they become now dark, then bright, or vivid, glaring, then thin, now luxuriant; now exotic, then percussive. All these factors are balanced and contrasted beautifully in Argenta's superb performance. The instrumentation is offbeat: single winds, a brass quartet, percussion, strings, plus a concertante of violin, cello, and double bass. The latter shines in a solo capacity in the last movement. From any point of view, this is a record to have and to enjoy often. Do not, however, read the jacket. By some primitive translation of the original Spanish, "Sinfonietta" becomes "Minor Symphony" (sic!). And (conductors) "took to their music-stands" is a gem that will make all librarians fear for their jobs. Best of all is this Ring Lardner canto: ". . . pure writing-abscence. . . and a present and Universal sense of harmony."

—A.C.

the late Ataulfo Argenta



The Concert-Masters of New York Play Kreisler, conducted by Emanuel Vardi: *Praeludium and Allegro; Siciliano and Rigaudon; Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E minor (Dvorák); Menuet (In the Style of Porpora); Variations on a Theme by Corelli; Tambourin Chinois; Caprice Viennois; La Gitana; Schön Rosmarin.* Decca DI-9986, $3.98.

▲THOUGH it seems a pity to proclaim almost unstinted admiration for The Concert-Masters and then add one reservation to the judgment, such must be the case here. On Kreisler's compositions and arrangements in the pre-romantic vein, this eminent group displays a capacity for split-second bowing, snap precision and exactitude, and mellow tone which should make similar European string ensembles look to their laurels. But when it comes to the moonlight and roses of *Liebesfreud* and *Liebesleid,* for example (and we must honestly say that these pieces are rather sticky to modern ears), The Concert-Masters seem suddenly to be stricken with self-consciousness, to find themselves a little bit embarrassed by those rubatos, and on the whole prevented from unbending enough really to serve up these period pieces with the perfume and red velvet they need. For my part, however, the baroque-style performances more than compensate for the romantic difficulties. —S.F.

■

LALO: *Symphonie espagnole, Op. 21;* **SAINT-SAËNS:** *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 28; Havanaise, Op. 83;* Yehudi Menuhin (violin), Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Eugene Goossens. Capitol-EMI G-7108, $4.98.

(Lalo)
Kogan ..... Angel 35503
Oistrakh ..... Angel 35205

▲MENUHIN has now recorded the Lalo three times—initially with Enesco in the early thirties, then with Fournet during the late forties (a performance, incidentally, which is still available as part of the Victor "Vault Treasures" series), and finally with Goossens in this latest version. That the violinist has an affinity to the work is beyond question, for he has always brought a great deal of enthusiasm to it. His performances on records have always included the third movement *Intermezzo,* which is frequently omitted by others. His playing in the Lalo as well as the two short Saint-Saëns works is very brilliant, but Menuhin seems to be striving for virtuosity at the expense occasionally of evenness, clarity, and intonation. This is not to say that he isn't in good form—only that a few passages should have been redone. Throughout all three pieces, also, Menuhin plays with a lushness, particularly in the lower strings, which seems a trifle forced, even though the quality itself is appropriate. The more effortless performances of Oistrakh and Kogan in this respect are to me preferable. It is surprising that in a work specifically called *Symphonie espagnole* rather than *Concerto espagnole* (which indicates the great importance of the orchestra in this music), the balance here is so poor. The violin is not recorded especially close to the microphone, but the orchestra is almost not to be heard at all! The conducting, unfortunately, also is not all it should be, for the accompaniments are merely perfunctory. The recording quality overemphasizes the highs slightly, and general warmth is lacking in the mid-range. —I.K.

■

MENDELSSOHN: *Symphony No. 4 in A, Op. 90 (Italian); Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 107 (Reformation);* Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor Stereo LSC-2221, $5.98.

▲MUNCH's approach to the "Italian" Symphony has a little too much seriousness of spirit. Where robust lightheartedness is required, we find a rather hard-boiled intensity; inflexibility is present where the music demands a yielding lyricism. Mendelssohn's landscape must be brightly sunlit. Too many storm clouds dot the sky over this one. The "Reformation" Symphony fares better with this somber-mindedness. Energetic and majestic by turns, the performance is quite satisfying. In both symphonies the dexterity of these Bostonians, sharply focused by Victor's excellent stereo sound, is admirable. —P.C.P.

For the first time, a hot-blooded Santuzza

By FRANK SPRY

IT IS unfortunate that one cannot see and hear an actual production of "*Cavalleria*" that compares with any of the extant recorded performances. At least, I never have. The Santuzzas and Turiddus to be encountered in opera houses—even the Metropolitan—are usually second-string artists, and even when they are great singers they are somehow demoralized by the shabbiness and ineptitude that characterizes the typical "*Cavalleria*" production. Companies rarely get around to overhauling this double-bill perennial.

On records, however, one can choose from among the finest principals of our time: Milanov and Bjoerling (RCA Victor LM-6106), Callas and Di Stefano (Angel 3509), Harshaw and Tucker (Columbia SL-123,) Nicolai and Del Monaco (London A-4323), Bruna Rasa and Gigli (RCA Victor LTC-6000), and now this latest release featuring Tebaldi and Bjoerling. Of course, the Bruna Rasa-Gigli version was one of the early "Treasury" series and is by now quite out of the running sonically. Also, Gigli was by no means at his best either vocally or dramatically. The performance is notable only because it was conducted by the composer and is prefaced by his spoken comments—a touching memento, to be sure.

Perhaps it would be indefensible to say that none of these predecessors is really worth-while. To my ears, nevertheless, the latest combines the best qualities that are one or another lacking in each of the other recordings. To start with, I feel about this release like the critic who wrote of Emma Eames' performance: "For the first time, Mascagni's desperate heroine has been liberated by a dramatic soprano with 'hot blood' in her veins." Tebaldi makes Santuzza the personification of a vengeful woman who is not, however, incapable of passion or heartbreak. Her understanding of the role, and her vocal mastery of it, are complete. For example, her transition from pleading and resignation to hatred in the duet with Turiddu (*Tu qui, Santuzza*) leaves the listener absolutely stunned. Bjoerling, for his part, sings with far more ease and feeling here than he did earlier. It is as if he were swept along by the sheer beauty and power of Tebaldi's portrayal. With Milanov he had sung beautifully, yes, but without much manifest comprehension of what was happening onstage. Another shortcoming of that set is that it sounds like a concert performance, as if no attempt had been made to separate the soloists and the chorus, all of whom seem to be equidistant. The same reservation applies to the London version, where it is especially evident in the *Inneggiamo, il Signor* (Easter Hymn). Also, Nicolai's Santuzza is all too reminiscent of Bruna Rasa's; it is more unhinged than unhappy. Del Monaco, admittedly, made a far more virile Turiddu, and also he produced an unexpectedly lovely lyric line.

Ironically, London's "*Cavalleria*" is strongest where the new Victor one is weakest—in the orchestra pit. Erede merely beats time where Ghione had captured the full dramatic intensity of the score. Nor does Erede elicit much conviction from the chorus. The principals carry the drama all by themselves in the new Victor performance. The closing

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MASCAGNI: "*Cavalleria Rusticana*"; Renata Tebaldi (Santuzza), Jussi Bjoerling (Turiddu), Ettore Bastianini (Alfio), others, Orchestra and Chorus of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino conducted by Alberto Erede; (side four: six operatic arias sung by Bjoerling with the same orchestra and conductor). RCA Victor set LM-6059, four sides, $9.96.

scene is particularly disappointing in its dearth of tragic overtones. When the woman enters with the cry, "*Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu*" ("Turiddu is killed"), one infers from her mildness of tone that there is really nothing to get upset over in the news she brings. It is a tribute to the leading singers that their artistry more than compensates for such lapses from the requisite style.

The fourth side is given to a sequence of arias, only one of which (*Cielo e mar*) is a standard of the recital hall. In the brief and beautiful *Amor ti vieta* from "*Fedora*" Bjoerling displays all the lyrical loveliness of his voice in its high register. The other selections—*Ch'ella mi creda* from "*The Girl of the Golden West*", *Lamento di Federico* from "*L'Arlesiana*", *Di tu se fedele flutto* from "*Ballo in Maschera*", and *Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde* from "*Manon Lescaut*"—are all of them delivered with a vocal richness that would be hard to surpass these days.

MESSIAEN: *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus;* Yvonne Loriod (piano). Westminster XWN-18469/70, $4.98 each.

▲THE "Twenty Glances" extend pianistic mysticism beyond the time-space frame of the concert-hall *or* the church, and even living-room listening is more effective in small samplings. Not to be approached by the intellect or lack of it, not by an open mind or a closed one, Messiaen depends for acceptance upon a complete surrender of the formalities of musical communication. Were it not for the titles his message might well be construed more Taoist than Christian, since the oriental godhead is more closely identified by the almost willful lack of known attributes! Add to this the fact that the piano is an unknown quantity as a purveyor of religious experience and one accounts for the gap in religious piano literature since Liszt, whose St. Francis tends to walk on the water with a rather heavy tread, and whose preachments to the birds could have taken place only in a *fin de siècle* aviary. Messiaen is more convincing. Mystical melody must of nature be either fragmentary or non-memorable, and the harmonization must be non-square. For those who wish to pursue the technique of Messiaen's musical language, he has provided a text on the subject (also, like Schönberg, he has written a harmony book!), but the sidelines of theory are more comfortable and the work itself more inspiring than the word. Miss Loriod is *the* chosen interpreter here (paralleling the perfect composer-performer relationship of Schönberg and Steuermann), the engineering is near-perfect, and the two volumes are elegantly cased. —J.B.L.

MOZART: *Horn Concerto No. 1 in D, K.V. 412; Horn Concerto No. 4 in E flat, K.V. 495;* James Stagliano (horn), Zimbler Sinfonietta (no conductor). Boston Stereo BST-1003, $5.95.

▲NOTHING less than highest recommendation is deserved by this recording. The performances are light-hearted and highly spirited—truly delightful. Stagliano, although his playing is indeed of virtuoso caliber, could demonstrate a little more flexibility of phrasing and liquidity of tone to suit me; his enthusiasm, however, easily outshadows these shortcomings. The sound is quite transparent and very clean at all times; the rather modest stereo effect is quite satisfying for this kind of music. —P.C.P.

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MOZART: *String Quintets in G minor, K. 516, and C minor, K. 406;* Griller String Quartet with William Primrose (viola). Vanguard VRS-1029, $4.98.

▲ANY listeners who, in the past, may have found the Griller Quartet somewhat lacking in warmth and power of communication (as this reviewer has on occasion) must brace themselves for a major revision of opinion now. Here is Mozart playing of real power—solid-boned, sturdy, even terse at times, but always beautiful in tone and phrasing, and full of color and contrast. The shaping factor in this performance is the rhythm, which is unshakable and very well defined without being in the least rigid. The Minuet of the *C minor*, for example, is almost Prussian in manner, while the Trio which follows is played as beguilingly as one could wish. Both sides of the record display an impressive sonority of sound. —S.F.

Flaws and all, in every way welcome

'Idomeneo' returns to the LP catalogue

By RICHARD RePASS

NEXT TO "*La Clemenza di Tito*", certainly "*Idomeneo*" is the most neglected opera of Mozart's maturity, and undeservedly so. Despite the shapeless, rambling libretto of the Abbé Varesco (to which Mozart himself applied drastic surgery) it contains a certain theatrical impact. The role of Electra, for example, is first cousin to Fiordiligi (on the one hand) and the Queen of the Night (on the other); with three arias that form the center-pieces of each act, it virtually defies casting from any but the front rank of today's singers. Ilia, the lovely Trojan maiden in love with Idamante, is sibling to the Countess Almaviva and Donna Elvira; Idamante, originally written for the castrato Dal Prato, is a tenor in this performance, and his role, except for some movingly introspective moments like the beginning of the quartet *Andro ramingo e solo*, is rather colorless. Idomeneo himself, a tenor, stems from the background of Gluck and his predecessors, and only rarely comes to musical life.

What distinguishes this opera from its predecessors (and in this one must include virtually the whole output of Gluck) is the intensity of dramatic expression conveyed in such passages as Electra's first and third act arias, the second act trio, *Pria di partir, o Dio!*, the quartet mentioned above, the third act chorus, *O voto tremendo*, and a number of other passages which bear the stamp of Mozart's individual genius. Composed shortly before Mozart's twenty-fifth birthday, "*Ido-*

MOZART: "*Idomeneo*"; Richard Lewis (Idomeneo), Léopold Simoneau (Idamante), Sena Jurinac (Ilia), Lucille Udovick (Electra), James Milligan (Arbace), William McAlpine (High Priest), Hervey Alan (Voice of Neptune), Glyndebourne Festival Chorus and Orchestra conducted by John Pritchard. Angel set 3574C/L, six sides, $15.94.



Act III of "Idomeneo" at Glyndebourne. The principals shown here, three of whom sing in the recording, are (left to right) Alexander Young, Sena Jurinac, Richard Lewis, Alfred Poell, Leopold Simoneau, and Birgit Nilsson.

meneo" lies almost halfway between the *opera seria* of Gluck and the triumphs of "*Don Giovanni*", "*Figaro*", and "*The Magic Flute*".

This Angel release fills a gap in the catalogues resulting from the deletion of the Haydn Society "*Idomeneo*". It is in every way welcome. Not only is the performance superior in nearly every respect, but also the recording is clearer, and in the sensible edition of Hans Gal the opera has greater verisimilitude. Gone is the curious feeling occasioned by the casting of Idamante as a mezzo-soprano: though the part lies occasionally in a difficult register, it is unfailingly more dramatic when sung by a man's voice. Other changes are for the better, too—dull stretches of recitative are omitted; the duet, *Spiegarti non poss'io* (composed for the Vienna revival of 1786), is substituted for the duller Ilia-Idamante duo in the original; Neptune's part is pruned to manageable length; and Arbace's commonplace arias are omitted. One has the feeling that Mozart (who himself sanctioned the casting of Idamante as tenor in 1786) would have approved all the changes.

There are flaws, however. The conductor, John Pritchard, sometimes drives forward without regard to the singers' capacities, making such passages as Idomeneo's aria, *Torna la pace* (sung by Richard Lewis) pretty much a shambles. Occasionally he lags behind, his conducting not so incisive as it could have been. This causes the Electra, Lucille Udovick, some difficult moments in her great final aria, *D'Oreste d'Aiace*. In general, however, the performance is a pleasing one: Lewis sings the part of Idomeneo with manly tones, if with limited eloquence; Leopold Simoneau does his best with the somewhat thankless part of Idamante; and Udovick is adequate, if unexciting, in her exacting role. Sena Jurinac, to whom a separate article might be devoted, is simply ravishing as Ilia. Her singing of *Zefiretti lusinghieri* should be treasured by every lover of *bel canto*. To one who has seen her Ilia on the stage, the illusion is doubly entrancing. Americans may well look forward to the day when she makes her debut on these shores.

There remains little more to say about the performance. The orchestral playing is unusually beautiful; the choruses are well sung; the recorded sound is magnificent. The album compares favorably in every respect to the old Haydn Society release on four records, which made Idamante a soprano and in general followed the older version (it also included the Ballet Music, K. 367, on the eighth side). Meinhard von Zallinger was a bit livelier than Pritchard, but his cast was inferior and his engineers not so skillful.

Old readers will remember Richard RePass, whose status herewith changes from alumnus to sometime contributor.

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From banal to beautiful

By ABRAHAM SKULSKY

CARL ORFF'S "*The Moon*" can be considered the composer's first opera. It followed immediately upon his now-famous "*Carmina Burana*", which (though it has been staged) is really much more oratorio than opera. The work was written in the late 1930s and first performed in 1939 at Munich. It was produced a few seasons ago by the New York City Center Opera, but did not make a very strong impression. This may have been partly due to the quality of the production, for when I listened to the present recording I hardly recognized the work.

As usual with Orff, he was his own librettist—this time he based his story on a Grimm fairy tale: Four lads, all from a country where moonlight never reaches, travel to another place where they see a lighted ball hanging from a tree. They are told that it is a moon which was bought by the Mayor, who gets a weekly salary for cleaning it. The four quickly realize that they could use the moon for their own village. While the people are getting drunk, they run off with it. Returning to their own village, they explain the moon's various uses and also demand a weekly wage to keep it in order. We hear distant angry shouts from the villagers whose moon was stolen. Time passes. The Four Fellows have grown old unto death. Each in turn asks that his share of the moon be put in his grave. As they die one by one, a quarter of the moon is hacked off with a pair of big scissors. After the fourth the villagers are again plunged in darkness. The next scene brings us to the mausoleum. Reunited, the quartet glue the quarters of the moon together and hang it on the ceiling. Its light stirs the other corpses from their eternal rest. The four explain that this light is there to help them have a good time. So the floor is cleared for dice, cards, and beer and skittles. The mausoleum quickly becomes a rough-house. Amid thunder claps rioting breaks out. Hoping to quiet down the din, the four extinguish the moon. This does not help any. Then St. Peter, disturbed at the goings on down there, takes drastic measures by hurling a comet to earth. Afterwards he himself appears. By now quiet has been restored, the moon is relit, and to the bemusement of St. Peter he is told what this light is. While the various games are put aside, St. Peter starts a new drinking party, after which, as he plans, the dead fall asleep again. At this point he orders them to return to their appointed rest and, putting out the light of the moon, he departs carrying its orb. In the last scene we see the moon in its rightful place —the sky—where St. Peter has put it. A small child exclaims: "Look, the moon is hanging there". At once the populace comes out to gaze blissfully at their new light

I for one never have been able to be enthusiastic about Orff's "new" approach to the musical language of the theater. It is true that I am always impressed at a first hearing of any of his works. But I am aware that this first impression is merely one of surprise. Orff's music cannot, I think, stand repetitions. For it addresses itself only to the senses, and never offers the slightest intellectual discovery. This composer has completely done away with certain elements in our concept of Western music. He has eliminated any hint of polyphonic design; he has reduced the harmonic language to its diatonic essen-

ORFF: "*Der Mond*" ("The Moon"—A Theatrical Microcosm); Rudolf Christ (narrator); Karl Schmitt-Walter, Helmut Graml, Paul Kuen, and Peter Lagger (the Four Fellows); Albrecht Peter (a farmer); Hans Hotter (St. Peter); others, Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch. Angel set 3567 B/L, four sides, $11.96.



"Der Mond"—Alfred Sierck's stage design for the Hamburg Staatsoper production.

tials; he uses the simplest kind of melodic invention, and has put to the fore such (musically) minor considerations as rhythmic ostinati and sonic originality. In other words, Orff tries to impress by Eastern methods (rhythm and sound) but he uses basically Western undeveloped techniques. In fact, Orff's rhythm is no rhythm at all. It is merely a certain regular metric pounding, which he derives from Stravinsky's early works, and the subtleties of irregular Eastern rhythms are totally absent.

Another fact which has to be stressed is Orff's sources of melodic material. The first, which I find rather successful, goes back to a certain archaic primitivism and is mainly used in his works of Greek and Roman inspiration such as *Catulli Carmina*, *Antigonae*, and *Trionfi di Afrodite*. Here, Orff does succeed in re-creating a certain remote atmosphere of antiquity, very well related to texts used. The composer's masterly ability to invent orchestral color and his domination of choral writing reinforce this mood. The second source of melody is much more localized and consists of the German popular song, more specifically that of the "*Bierstube*" or beer house. It is prevalent in *Carmina Burana*, in "*The Moon*", and in "*Die Kluge*". It is by no means true folklore but merely a sort of drinking song which one hears mostly sung by drunkards and other peasantly characters in the beer halls of Southern Germany.

We should never forget that Orff started this "novel" approach in 1935 with his *Carmina Burana*. Very understandably, it fitted in a most marvelous manner the Nazi concept of art. No wonder, then, that Orff became one of the most admired and performed composers under the Nazis. By this I do not mean to imply that Orff himself was a Nazi. Only that his artistic concept and theirs coincided.

"*The Moon*" presents all these particularities of Orff's music and his dramatic approach. Where the composer simply tries to re-create the fairy-tale world he is most evocative. Such is the case with most of the first act, with its beautiful orchestral interlude, "Time goes by", and the entire scene of the death of the Four Fellows, where the music becomes truly emotional. The stanzas by St. Peter and also the very end, with the child discovering the moon in heaven, are equally atmospheric and beautiful. By contrast most of the second act, with its continuous use of the German beer song, its brawling and gambling, its use of vile and dirty language, I find banal and almost unbearable. On the whole, to sum up, this opera (or *Singspiel* as I am more inclined to call it) is somewhat more varied than Orff's other works.

I have rarely heard anything so perfectly performed and recorded. It is quite unnecessary to go into details of the quality of every singer or speaking role involved. The same holds true of both orchestra and chorus and more especially the magnificent directing by Sawallisch. And perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of this recording is the extreme realism of its sound. Every bit of stage direction is most clearly audible. We actually hear the shearing of the moon, the card playing, the sound of dice, and that of skittles. Last but not least, the sound of the comet is something terrifying and unique. We are even told that its beginning is only audible to dogs. I think that, in this case, every dog should acquire this recording.

A permanent rainbow . . .

By MARK BUCCI

Our guest reviewer is himself an opera composer of consequence as well as an unreconstructed Puccinian. His "*Tale for a Deaf Ear*", produced at New York City Center this year and soon to be published by the Frank Music Co., will be coupled with his "*Sweet Betsy from Pike*" and "*The Dress*" in a special all-Bucci production entitled "*Triad*" which is scheduled to open in an off-Broadway house on the 20th of this month.

IN PUCCINI'S gallery of operatic heroines, perhaps the most affecting portrait is that of Cio-Cio-San in "*Madama Butterfly*". His previous operas seem to have been building to this characterization; in those that followed he appears to be searching for something else, only to end with Butterfly's antithesis—Turandot. To me, these women are two sides of the same coin, the two personalities of Puccini's Muse. One is all innocence, pure emotion, frail on the outside yet strong within; the other is cerebral, unapproachable, seemingly strong but deep within weakened by fear. For all the encroaching pathos and tragedy in "*Butterfly*", the opera nevertheless seems to be flooded with light, whereas in "*Turandot*" there pervades a curious sense of nighttime (above and beyond that called for in the score). In "*Butterfly*" the heroine's faith is tested as a result of the hero, whereas Turandot puts her hero to a seemingly impossible test. Butterfly's strength is her love; Turandot's, non-love (lack of emotion). And both women ultimately are defeated by that which is their opposite: in Butterfly's case, Pinkerton's indifference; with Turandot, the Calaf's ardor.

In "*Butterfly*", Puccini achieved something which was indeed difficult to improve on. His next work, "*La Rondine*", is extremely light, but already one feels a cynicism beginning to set in, and later, in *Il Trittico*, a brooding kind of unrest subtly permeates. Perhaps because his final illness was upon him during the writing of "*Turandot*", Puccini might have been unconsciously testing his theatrical aims and vocabulary as mercilessly as Turandot tested her suitors. In her case the test turned on her, and she had to guess the Calaf's name. And through this we garner a hint that Puccini had come around to the other side of the coin again. As with the Calaf's name, the answer is Love. Had he lived on, one wonders in what further ways Puccini would have solved this riddle.

It seems fairly certain that his art would have reached higher peaks. But with what remains, for me at any rate, "*Madama Butterfly*" represents the apex of Puccini's achievement. Seldom have human emotions been so forcefully, accurately, and compassionately projected in a musicodramatic work. The heroine of a short (and rather tawdry) play he transformed from a drab larva to a creature of opalescent loveliness.

One wonders why this opera is so good, why it always "works". Perhaps it is

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PUCCINI: "*Madama Butterfly*" (complete) Anna Moffo (Cio-Cio-San); Rosalind Elias (Suzuki); Cesare Valletti (Lt. B. F. Pinkerton); Miti Truccato Pace (Kate Pinkerton); Renato Cesari (Sharpless); Fernando Corena (The Bonze); others, Orchestra and Chorus of the Rome Opera House conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. RCA Victor set LM-6135, six sides, $14.94, or Stereo set LSC-6135, $17.94.

because it deals almost exclusively with aspects of love (more so than his other works, although this is his trademark). None of these characters is concerned with hate—not even the agent, Goro. And especially in this opera, love is synonymous with life and vice versa. One cannot listen to it without being engulfed in its distilled translucency; even when Cio-Cio-San meets her tragic demise, Puccini seems to be saying: "And yet, in the midst of death is life."

Equally important from a technical standpoint, he has so masterfully delineated her growth of character that we experience something quite rare in this work: that quality of being swept onward past the final curtain. Theatrical devices (musical or otherwise) cannot by themselves insure this effect; generally it can only be achieved by the skillful, gradual development of characterization. (Two essentially non-musical instances come to mind: the Hedgerow Theatre production of Jane Bowles' "In the Summerhouse" and Marcel Marceau's "man catching a butterfly" impression. Both of these seemed to break through and go on in time even though their actual performance had come to a stop.) To do this successfully the dramatist must approach his subject with more than a little understanding; he must *become* that person. This was, perhaps, Puccini's greatest gift. All his characters ring true, and we want to get to know them; sometimes we can see part of ourselves reflected in them.

Some artists, in their work, tend to weave a dusty web out of darkness(hoping to catch a few rays from the oncoming dawn); others suck on the pyramidical ice-cube of perfection (but seldom quench anyone's thirst, least of all their own). Puccini was content to use the primary colors, seeing therein more Yang (dark) than Yin (light). And to those who prefer something a little more human (consequently a little less than perfect), Puccini is like that moment in the day when rain finally ceases and one senses the separating and blending of all things.



Playback time. Seated clockwise: Marek (backto camera), Leinsdorf, Moffo, Recording Director Richard Mohr, and Valletti.

Perhaps there was more light in his day, for now the rain seems to last a little longer, the clouds will not give way so easily, and it is a bit harder to see the sun. Yet all things (if looked at) reflect even the least available light, and there are certain legacies which time and darkness cannot squander. One of these is the Puccini *corpus*. Painting with sound, he left us a permanent rainbow—the arc of the human soul.

And so to RCA Victor's stunning new recording of "*Madama Butterfly*". It is distinguished primarily by a delicate approach in its interpretation, and the most successful of all in this respect is Anna Moffo. Her performance as Cio-Cio-San can compare to Toti Dal Monte's. Signorina Moffo has the skill to underplay the role where some sopranos get so carried away that if it weren't for the music one would swear Scarpia was lurking there, somewhere under the chrysanthemums. It takes phenomenal vocal and histrionic control to perform this role as the composer intended, and for my taste it is immensely satisfying to have Cio-Cio-San relocated in Japan after so many years in Italy.

The Pinkerton might have been a bit more robust, and the Sharpless a shade more involved with the proceedings, but since obviously there was an attempt overall to recapture Puccini's *sfumato* quality, Cesare Valletti and Renato Cesari are more than acceptable in their respective roles. Rosalind Elias is touching as Suzuki, and the cast otherwise is generally excellent. Erich Leinsdorf's conducting is admirable, if somewhat restrained. Special thanks to Puccini biographer George R. Marek for producing this "re-studied" performance with such careful affection.

Two hours and ten minutes of pure gold

By JOHN W. BARKER

IN A SENSE it was a great tragedy that England's foremost native-born composer of music for the theater, Henry Purcell, wrote but one opera. Magnificent as it undeniably is, "*Dido and Aeneas*" is a lonely masterpiece that suggests eloquently what the literature of "English opera" might have been had Purcell been able to apply his genius in that field with more concentration. But the theatrical tastes of Restoration London audiences went in different directions, preferring, in the wake of French styles, spectacular dramatic presentations with extensive music. As shallow and barren as were many of these plays, to which Purcell often contributed the music, his scores for this purpose thus represent the bulk of his output for the stage. If they lack unity, continuity, and any real dramatic involvement with the plots they do at least contain some wonderful arrays of music, on which Purcell's reputation as a master of lyric theater may, and deservedly does, rest. Among these scores, dating significantly from the last five years of the composer's life, are the ones for "*Dioclesian*" (1690, text by Betterton from Beaumont and Fletcher), "*King Arthur*" (1691, text by Dryden), "*The Fairy Queen*" (1692, text by [?] Settle after Shakespeare), "*The Tempest*" (1645, text after Shakespeare and Dryden), and "*The Indian Queen*" (1695, text by Dryden and Howard).

Among these the largest and most pretentious score is for "*The Fairy Queen.*" (Confusion with Edmund Spenser notwithstanding, the spelling should not be "*Faerie*".) The text, unfortunately, is a pitiful shambles. In the Resoration the Bard did not have the reputation he now enjoys and a "revival" of Shakespeare was in addition a rewriting. Out of labors attributed to one Elkanah Settle emerged a hopeless hash of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which totally new and trite verses had been interpolated, providing for music in the form of songs, masques to conclude each of the acts, and various instrumental interludes and dances. Ironically, as the texts were set forth, one of England's greatest composers was never given an opportunity to set a word by one of England's greatest poets; Shakespeare's lines are brushed aside in favor of the tripe of a hack. It is therefore all the more amusing that the first masque should show a drunken poet abused by fairies who cry:

> "Pinch him, pinch him for his crimes,
> his nonsense and his doggerel rhymes.."

In spite of such a text the production, first given in April of 1692, was a great success and was repeated the following year. It was for this revival that Purcell brought the score to its present state, with the addition of the music for Act I, as well as two other songs including the famous Act V *Plaint*. In spite of its popularity the complete score of *The Fairy Queen* was never published in Purcell's lifetime, although selections from it did appear in the "Select Songs" printed in 1692 by Heptinstall. After Purcell's death (1695), the manuscript of the full

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PURCELL: "*The Fairy Queen*"; Jennifer Vyvyan, Elsie Morison (sopranos); Peter Pears (tenor); John Whitworth, Peter Boggis (counter-tenors); Thomas Hemsley, Trevor Anthony (basses), St. Anthony Singers, Boyd Neel Orchestra conducted by Anthony Lewis. Oiseau-Lyre set OL-50139/41, six sides, $14.94.

score passed obscurely through various private hands and in short order was lost from view. Various attempts were made to find it, but it did not turn up till J. S. Shedlock discovered it in the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1901. No manuscript discovery could have enriched the musical world more than this one.

"*The Fairy Queen*" is one of the marvels of Purcell's output. In comparison to the austere economy of "*Dido and Aeneas*" this music is far more extensive, varied, and richly scored. The score is an opulent profusion of riches: rousing choruses (that suggest, by the way, something of the substantial debt the "Handelian" choral style owes to Purcell), delightful comic interludes, grandiose and magnificent symphonies, and beguiling dances. The score has received occasional modern revivals: Sadler's Wells gave one lavishly staged version in 1946; and a presentation was made just last season at Columbia University. But the music has long cried out for full phonographic treatment.

There has been in the past, to be sure, some scattered attention to this music on LP. Individual selections occasionally made their way into general programs on records. Alfred Deller, in one of his releases for Bach Guild (BG-547) included lovely performances of three numbers, Nos. 15 (*Mystery's Song*), 16 (*Secrecy's Song*) and 43 (*The Plaint*). Two more such pieces, though not in the original form, were included in a Purcell recital by Russell Oberlin for Esoteric (ES-533): No. 51 (*Hark! Hark! The ech'ing air*) and part of No. 53 (*Turn, turn thine eyes*—originally a duet). More extensive selections were offered on one side of one of the earliest Oiseau-Lyre discs (subsequently numbered OL-50029) comprising Nos. 22 (*Dance for the Fairies*), 23 (*Dance for the Green Men*), 43 (*The Plaint*), 4 (*Rondeau*), 51 (*Hark! Hark! The ech'ing air*), 49 (*Monkey's Dance*), and part of 54 (*Chaconne*). In spite of the direction of Anthony Lewis and the voice of Margaret Ritchie, the results left something to be desired, to a great extent because of a quality of recording sound quite inferior to the usual Oiseau-Lyre standards.

But the grandaddy of all LP treatments of this music came out on the old and usually feeble Allegro label (originally AL-60, four 10-inch sides, then transferred to AL-3077, two 12-inch sides). This recording offered the largest selection of excerpts available at any time previously or subsequently: for brevity's sake, the selections comprised Nos. 1-6, 10, 20, 14, 17, 43, 45, 51, 30, 31, 35, 37, 39, and three portions of 53-4. The performance, recorded in conjunction with a concert at Harvard in May of 1950, was conducted by Daniel Pinkham and featured Phyllis Curtin among the vocalists. While the recording technically was not of the highest quality, it was quite serviceable; more important, the performance was excellent. The end-product was a record



Act I, Scene I at Sadler's Wells (Robert Helpmann and Margaret Rawlings)

this reviewer has cherished to this day. Moreover it whetted the appetite excitingly and made one await with impatience the day when the full score would be recorded.

Herewith that long-standing gap has been filled: Oiseau-Lyre supersedes its previous effort by giving Lewis a chance to record the complete score in all its glory.

And glorious it is! The performers all rise to the occasion with spirit and verve. One can note only one weakness among them: the two counter-tenors are nowhere near the level of their colleagues. Boggis is just plain poor as a singer; and Whitworth, while not on the same level as Alfred Deller—who is conspicuous by his absence here—has sung much better than he does this time. Otherwise, there is not a valid complaint to be made with the performers. The other singers are all wonderful: Miss Vyvyan's consummate artistry is as always a special joy to hear, and also outstanding is Hemsley (who will be remembered for his Aeneas in the Mermaid Theatre's "*Dido*", originally HMV-1007, now RCA Victor LM-2019). In the Boyd Neel Orchestra, of course, Lewis has a first-class ensemble with which to work, and the chorus also is splendid. The harpsichordist is not named, though the quality of his work brings to mind Thurston Dart: if it is not that admirable musician, let this thought itself be a compliment to whomever it may be. In short, with the above exception, it is almost impossible to speak too highly of this performance. It has life, imagination, excitement, and high artistry all in full. Finally, all this pure gold is spun out for us in superb sound that gives the shopworn term "hi-fi" real meaning.

But the most significant virtue of this set is perhaps its completeness. At last this great score stands forth as a masterpiece in its entirety, as big in stature as it is in length—the music runs to almost two hours and ten minutes, and must have made for a long evening's entertainment when set within the play, even in its truncated form. At last the almost inexhaustible and varied genius of Purcell is shown on an appropriately extensive canvas. At last one may come to this music and appreciate the fullness of its riches. I venture to say that, regardless of its intrinsic quality, this set is one of the most important Purcell recordings ever issued, and quite possibly *the* most important.

Let us hope, moreover, that this release will encourage the much-needed recording of other complete scores of Purcell's major theatrical works. Indeed, there once was a record of some music from "*King Arthur*" on a short-lived label named Magictone, but this is long extinct. There is also at present a British recording of the complete "*Indian Queen*", but this is available only by subscription. (This magazine would be happy to pass on any interested inquiries about the latter.) Plainly, here is a fruitful vein of musical wealth still waiting to be exploited.

Yet, this review must end on a bitter note. For this wonderful set is in a way a swan song, a last gasp from a label that is being discontinued—at least in this country, though apparently not in England. Thus, not only this significant and magnificent release, but a long line of others soon will be entirely unavailable; many of them are already. No one can claim that the Oiseau-Lyre label was not a prolific one: rather, it had about as extensive and fine a catalogue of early music as the LP market has seen to date. One must reflect with rage on the seemingly endless procession of wonderful records that are now being cast into outer darkness. (Our good editor maintains that since the masters are still preserved there is always the hope that someone will buy them and reissue these recordings, but this possibility seems small consolation at the moment!) The inexorable demands of corporation economics, the whims of boards of directors, and the craze of stereo are all factors that may have played a role in this *débacle*. But whatever the explanation there is something sadly wrong with an industry that allows so valuable a label to die like this. It is hence all the more sad to be reminded of the extent of the loss by the special excellence of the present recording.



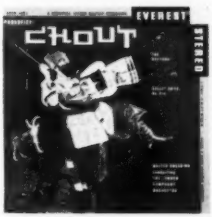
Mahler: Symphony No. 1 in D Major—Sir Adrian Boult, London Philharmonic Orch. **LPBR-6005**



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RAVEL: *Bolero*; *Ma Mère l'Oye*; **CHABRIER:** *Bourrée fantasque;* Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Paray. Mercury Stereo SR-90005, $5.95.

▲THESE stereodisc transfers are sonic delights. Paray's readings, although somewhat restrained and a mite inflexible, are quite exciting. What really catches one's attention, however, is Mercury's fantastic dynamic range. As a result, the impact of the *Bolero* is positively awesome. A word of caution on this—don't push for too much volume at the beginning if you don't want to have to readjust your level downward several times during the course of the piece. Besides possessing this remarkable dynamic range, the sound is quite clean and uncolored; tape has an edge over disc sound such as this only in its ability to add an extra degree of sheen and ever-so-slightly more clarity in loud, complex passages. Stereo effects here are every bit the equal of those on tape. In short, highly recommended, especially to those who look on the future of high-quality disc stereo skeptically. —P.C.P.

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RAVEL: *Quartet in F;* **DEBUSSY:** *Quartet in G minor, Op. 10;* Budapest String Quartet. Columbia ML-5245, $3.98.

▲THIS Ravel-Debussy recording by the Budapest is *not* a re-release of the identical coupling on an earlier Columbia disc (ML-4668), but offers a brand new pair of performances by the same personnel. Aside from the human vagaries which are natural (the ever-so-slightly bad intonation on a conspicuous cadence in the Ravel second movement, for example, in the new recording) the two versions are, to my ear, both on the same high level. The all-important element of color is given due attention, without belaboring the point, and the solo passages—even more crucial, of course—are beautifully played. The ensemble sense which is so strong a quality of the Budapest Quartet enables it to submerge the background figuration in both works to just the right degree, while the solo melodic lines soar over, creating an appreciable third dimension. As for the engineering, the new version of the Debussy is a bit closer and cleaner than the old, but for some reason the new Ravel sounds slightly inferior. —S.F.

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RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Scheherazade;* Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Mario Rossi. Vanguard Stereo Demonstration Disc SRV-103-SD, $2.98.

▲HERE is a heap of fine stereo for a bargain price. Rossi's performance, previously released on a similarly low-cost monophonic demonstration disc, is solid and straightforward enough, although on the unexciting side. This lack of excitement, however, is more than made up for by Vanguard's sound. Stereo's separation, clarity, and spaciousness are all very much present; combined with clean, uncolored sound quality these traits make for a stunning hi-fi experience. I much prefer this sort of demonstration album to those made up of ill-assorted and frustratingly short snatches of music and sound effects. The ability of really good sound to maintain its "spectacularness" through even the less showy passages, engineering wise, of a sizable piece of music, is the best quality demonstration of all; moreover, this sort of musical completeness is much more satisfying.—P.C.P.

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ROSSINI: *"William Tell" Overture;* *"Thieving Magpie" Overture;* **AUBER:** *"Fra Diavolo" Overture;* **HÉROLD:** *"Zampa" Overture;* **REZNIČEK:** *"Donna Diana" Overture;* Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster XWN-18732, $4.98.

▲SCHERCHEN reminds one of the fatherly advice: "Never trouble trouble until you're troubled." For the facts are that with the rigid playing the trouble is doubled. The *"William Tell"* begins badly, with some prickly tone quality and some out-of-focus intonation on the part of the first cellist. It does not get better, with the balances of the brass poorly planned. The intonation is misty even in the "Lone Ranger" section. The *"Magpie"* is played with no regard for its snide penetrations. The Hérold and Rezniček redeem matters somewhat, but the Auber meets defeat. —A.C.

SCHUBERT: *Trio No. 2 in E flat, Op. 100;* Immaculate Heart Trio. Capitol P-8442, $4.98.

▲HAVING heard the three sisters who constitute this group (all members of the Immaculate Heart order), perform recently at a Catholic Music Educators Conference concert, I fully expected to admire their first recording. But the allure of a live concert presentation is not present in the colder locale of record grooves. Not that the playing is second-class. Far from that, the performance is free of intonational impurity, the tonal elements are fairly good (better in the cello than in the violin), and the ensemble is in order. What is lacking is a sharpness of meaning —the aesthetic spirit is unresponsive. Schumann described the Trio (comparing it to the companion in B flat) as music that is "active, masculine, and dramatic". The first and third words are the key to a proper performance. The sisters lose the thread of the first movement because Schubert himself lacked in this part of the Trio the touch of the true dramatist. It is not only plot but pace that is demanded of great art. The lengthiness of the initial movement is colossal, resulting in a loss of the essential ideas that machinate it. The second part has much more creative wisdom, and is played better. But the sense of orienting and then relating one section to the next, necessary in the prolonged content of the opening movement, just is not present. When chordal tutti occur the dramatic is substituted by sonorous roughage. It is a paradox that Schubert's formal laxity can only register by interpretative coherence of classical order. Without it the music can well become boredom. —A.C.

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The Blue Danube: STRAUSS, JOH.: *The Blue Danube Waltz, Acceleration Waltz, Emperor Waltz, Roses from the South Waltz;* **STRAUSS, JOH. and JOS.:** *Pizzicato Polka;* Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Josef Krips. London Stereo CS-6007, $4.98.

▲CHARMING is an inadequate word for this recording. Relaxed elegance, an inclination towards the sentimentally lyrical, and a happiness of spirit are among the ingredients of these truly first-rate performances. London has provided a full-bodied stereo sound with which little fault could be found. Lovers of Viennese lilt shouldn't miss this one. —P.C.P.

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STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka;* Cento Soli Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Albert. Omega Stereo OSL-8, $5.95.

▲LETHARGIC tempi rob this otherwise satisfactory performance of the necessary sparkle and vigor Albert has coaxed marvelously precise and carefully enunciated playing from this orchestra; with a little more dash and energy, more semblance of abandon, this reading could be really first-rate. If it is not a particularly exceptional performance however, this disc certainly is near perfect in its engineering. Stereo makes itself felt very strongly, for there are numerous opportunities in the music for instrument-placement and separation effects to show themselves. The sound quality is extremely clean, wide range, and natural throughout. —P.C.P.

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TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36;* Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Constantin Silvestri. Angel Stereo S-35565, $5.98

▲ALTHOUGH A. K.'s denunciation of this performance (in the September ARG) was extraordinarily vehement, I must, on hearing the corresponding stereodisc version, honestly agree with him. Surface noise is excessive on my copy, but the sound is generally quite clean and spacious. Unfortunately, fine engineering cannot save this recording. Musically it is a disaster. —P.C.P.

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TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique");* Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. RCA Victor Stereo LSC-1901, $5 98.

▲THE warm-bloodedness of Monteux's art belies this grand old gentleman's eighty-odd years. Buoyant vigor tempered with tender lyricism mark this performance as first-rate, though less impassioned than others. The sound is somewhat cloudy and rough-edged, but superbly spacious stereo wise. —P.C.P.



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EDWIN GERSHEFSKI: Saugatuck Suite
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JACOB AVSHALOMOV: The Taking of T'ung Kuan
NORMAN CAZDEN: Three Ballads from the Catskills
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ELLIOTT CARTER: Eight Etudes and a Fantasy
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ROBERT McBRIDE: Pumpkin Eater's Little Fugue; Workout for Orchestra
ULYSSES KAY: Round Dance; Polka
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MEL POWELL: Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello; Divertimento for Violin and Harp; Divertimento for Five Winds
CRI-121

ROBERT NAGEL: Trumpet Concerto
IRWIN FISCHER: Hungarian Set
CHOU WEN-CHUNG: Landscapes
JOHN LESSARD: Concerto for Winds and Strings
CRI-122

Composers Recordings, Inc.
2121 BROADWAY NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

18th-century France: an interesting start

VAN MALDERE: *Symphony in B flat, Op. 4, No. 3*; **GOSSEC:** *Sinfonia in G, Op. 12, No. 2*; **GRÉTRY:** *Dances from "La rosiere republicaine"*; **CLÉRAMBAULT:** *Sinfonia quarta;* M-G-M Chamber Orchestra conducted by Carlos Surinach. M-G-M E-3615, $4.98.

▲OVER the past few years the medium of LP has revealed a whole world of musical activity in eighteenth-century Italy, especially in the field of the symphony. Thus the normal concentration on Austria and the Germanies for music of this form in the "Classical" period had to be widened in the face of new perspective. The record at hand may suggest that the same thing might well be done for France. Certainly the treatment afforded by this one disc is hardly on the scale of that already given the Italian literature; much more music would need airing, with more composers represented, not the least of whom would have to be Etienne Méhul (1763-1813). But this record is an interesting start. The two composers represented on side one are the more familiar of the quartet. François Joseph Gossec (1734-1829) was born in Flanders, but spent most of his life in France, getting his start as a protégé of the great Rameau (1683-1764). He was highly regarded in his day, but has since become one of those "textbook composers" of whom we read something but hear nothing. His reputation among scholars as an experimenter and innovator, however, makes one curious to sample his music. Unfortunately the work of his here is a rather routine three-movement *sinfonia* which is most charitably written off as one of his less significant or characteristic pieces. The Grétry music is, of course, not in symphonic form, and thus of less interest from the standpoint of delving into this specific literature. But the group of dances from one of his stage works may give a taste of the music of a man who was a matinée idol in his day. André Grétry (1741-1813—not 1823 as the notes say) may not have been a profound or learned composer, but he wrote with verve and melodious charm, and he deserves better at the hands of posterity and records than he has received so far. The two lesser known composers, on side two, contribute the most interesting music. Pierre van Maldere (1729-1768), almost forgotten today, was a composer who plainly contributed significantly to the development of the symphony, to an extent that would merit him a place with the Stamitz *père* and J. C. Bach. His representation here is a sound demonstration of this, for it is by way of a finely constructed three-movement *sinfonia* to my ears strikingly foreshadowing the style of Mozart. Perhaps the finest music on the disc is the little piece by Louis Nicolas Clérambault (1676-1746), the only composer of these four "Frenchmen" actually born in France. He is now remembered, if at all, for a few organ pieces. As his lifespan would indicate, he antedates the bulk of the music of this program and had little to do with the development of the "Classical" symphony as such. Instead, this isolated, single-movement, four-voice work in grave and noble style, composed perhaps in the first decade of the eighteenth century, could easily be imagined as the opening slow section of one of the better overtures to a Handel opera or oratorio; it is really lovely music. Carlos Surinach, up to now distinguished as an interpreter of contemporary music, to which he himself contributes, makes a rather unexpected appearance as conductor here. He does have a tendency to push along some of the music a little too harshly, but in general he acquits himself commendably, as do the members of his anonymous ensemble. M-G-M, for some unfathomable reason, still refuses to learn that dry, deadish acoustics can spoil an otherwise splendid record. In all fairness it may be said that the sound is not so bad as in some previous releases from this company, and the record is decidedly worth-while in spite of it, as indicated. —J.W.B.

'Give him the prize!'

By JACK DIETHER

FOR this review I compared Kempe's new "*Meistersinger*" with its chief competitor, the Knappertsbusch (London), and also with the deleted Von Karajan (Columbia) and Böhm (Act 3 only, RCA Victor). The latter are useful for background reference, but naturally it is to the former that I shall address the most explicit comparisons. I did not have the older Kempe (Urania) at hand, which I recall as more superseded both in sound and in some of the principal casting than the deleted versions are. As this recording is also slated for peremptory deletion, however, Tiana Lemnitz fans should make no delay in trying to secure a copy. The release of the new Angel was delayed about three months by a "mechanical difficulty". The set I finally received would not track at all on side 9. On exchanging it, I had no further problem, so I would advise any prospective purchasers to be sure that they have perfect copies.

Those who like stage realism in an opera recording sometimes can find this combined with the liveliest and truest sound in one recording—for example, the Opéra-Comique "*Carmen*" (on the late Columbia). This has not been the case with "*Die Meistersinger*", however, and listeners who prize the Bayreuth recording under Von Karajan for its occasional crowd noises, screams, scufflings, cheering, and laughter, have to accept this in conjunction with some pretty cavernous muffling of important vocal and wind parts, and generally erratic balance. This was not one of the better Festspielhaus tapings. The London and Angel studio performances substitute beautiful, clean sounds, superior balance, and a little deadness dramatically. It is quite ridiculous, for instance, for the prentices after the festive procession to cry "*Silentium*! *Silentium*!" to a crowd that hasn't uttered a sound. The Bayreuth and Böhm recordings were both excellent in this respect.

But within their conventional limitations, the two later versions are quite exceptional in presenting the purely musical side of the score with greater fidelity than one will usually hear it in the rough-and-tumble of the theater. All the versions referred to above are absolutely uncut, so that one is able to perceive as never before how fully, justly, and without redundance Wagner has developed each of his several important characters. Even Walther does not emerge as quite the same person when we fail to hear his wonderful "snuffling, screeching, jeering, grimacing" Mastersinger nightmare.

(Note: London's libretto is *not* complete, being a reprint of the Metropolitan libretto, with the Corder translation, so it is impossible to follow the whole recording

---

WAGNER: "*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*"; Ferdinand Frantz (Hans Sachs), Rudolf Schock (Walther von Stolzing), Elisabeth Grümmer (Eva), Benno Kusche (Sixtus Beckmesser), Gerhard Unger (David), Marga Höffgen (Magdalene), Gottlob Frick (Veit Pogner), Gustav Neidlinger (Fritz Kothner), Hermann Prey (The Nightwatchman), Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Chorus of the Municipal Opera and German State Opera, and Choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral, Berlin, conducted by Rudolf Kempe. Angel set 3572 E/L, ten sides, $25.90.

Kempe, Dresden State Opera.....Urania 206
Knappertsbusch, Vienna S.O.....London 4601

Large photo: Conductor Rudolf Kempe. Below, left to right: Ferdinand Frantz (Hans Sachs), Elisabeth Gruemmer (Eva), and Rudolf Schock (Walther).






with it. Angel gives the ostensibly complete text, with the Jameson translation from the Eulenburg miniature score and the Schirmer vocal score, and using the admirable method of placing each English line below the corresponding German line, in bolder type-face. Unhappily, Angel relegates the more complex ensembles—the first two finales and the third act quintet—to appendices and gives them in English only. And just to make it a little more confusing, the back-and-forth page references are all wrong by one digit.)

The loving exposition of orchestral and ensemble detail by Kempe and Knappertsbusch brings out seldom-heard beauties in profusion, but at the same time Kempe is mostly without those dragging propensities of Knappertsbusch that occasionally take much of the fun out of it (e.g. at the light, tripping theme of David that breaks in on Sachs' painful reverie at the third act curtain). In the Dance of the Prentices, Knappertsbusch's view of Wagner's "moderate waltz tempo" converts it into a regular hard-shoe affair (unfortunately without the shoes). In the Bayreuth version there was also a little squareness and stolidness in passages like the third act interlude, but in such cases I find it harder to attribute it to Von Karajan than to the necessity of accurately cueing in isolated players from backstage (that "one-two-three-NOW!" sort of beat).

As between London and Angel, the only singer I definitely prefer in the former is Paul Schoeffler, a Sachs exceptionally strong both in authority and humanity—vocally a completely unselfconscious Mastersinger. If there is a Stanislavsky method in operatic singing, it must be infinitely harder to accomplish than in the straight theater, but Schoeffler's achievement suggests that perhaps there is such a thing. It is too bad he doesn't get quite the support that Ferdinand Frantz (another fine Sachs on a less complete scale) gets—and this is important, for remember that Sachs has to sing difficult scenes with each of the other principals in turn. One member of Angel's excellent cast, in fact, could almost have matched Schoeffler point for point. Benno Kusche easily tops his rival as Beckmesser, with an incredible realization of the split-second changes between malice, greed, self-pity, and fawning subservience encompassed by this taxing but rewarding role. In his third act scene with Sachs, in which each of these emotions reaches its own apotheosis in turn, Kusche establishes the man so infallibly that on his last high A he can afford to forego the usual grotesque falsetto for a tone which Alec Robertson has singled out as "worthy of a Mastersinger". I still find infinite delight in the way Eugen Fuchs hysterically shrieks out this word "*wachs*" (rhymed with Sachs) in the Böhm set, but perhaps even Beckmesser should be allowed his unalloyed moment of supreme triumph. In the first act trial scene, I find Kusche's sigh of inquisitorial martyrdom on "*Ein sau'res Amt*" ("A bitter task") chillingly reminiscent of the late Senator McCarthy.

The voice of Walther is "on display" in this work in a more literal sense than any other tenor part I can think of, and Angel's Schock is so much more ingratiating than London's Treptow that I gladly join the crowd on the bank of the Pegnitz and shout "Give him the prize!" Both Davids

are pleasing enough, Unger being more suitably youthful-sounding than Dermota, and Marga Hoffgen is a very nice Magdalena indeed. Of the Pogner family, the elder is presented with dignity and deliberation by Gottlob Frick. Listening to this opera at home, I most miss the visual aspect of the moment when the proud old man is suddenly left holding the gold chain he has wrought with such loving care and not knowing what to do with it. And though he is silent at that moment, Frick almost makes you see his consternation, so well has he built the character up by voice alone. Otto Edelmann's tendency to bawl out the quieter syllables makes Pogner more of a Polonius-figure in the London set, and rather disfigures the role of Sachs which he assumed in the Bayreuth version. The younger Pogner, Eva, his "*einzig Kind*", is found a rather taxing role, I think, by Hilde Gueden on London. She has a slight tendency to scoopiness, shortness of breath, and relapse into nasal tone at inappropriate moments. Elisabeth Grümmer handles a similarly light-textured voice with more consistency of appeal. Alas, only on the deleted Bayreuth do we have a satisfying rendition of that final, consummating trill (after "No one but thou") in the closing scene, and I will not compound the frustration by dwelling on Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's other excellences, which are not approximated here.

What Harold Schonberg calls Kothner's "howlingly funny parody of a Handelian aria" depends for its comic effect on the singer's being able to deliver roulades as capably as the orchestra imitates them—otherwise he is just a poor imitation of Beckmesser. Gustav Neidlinger and Alfred Poell can, but Heinrich Pflanzl (Bayreuth) can't; it's as simple as that. As to which of the former is better, it is probably a conditioned reflex that leans me toward Poell because his dry timbre is thoroughly associated in my mind with another very funny satire on pedantry, Mahler's *Praise of Lofty Intellect*. Finally the Nightwatchman's "Hark, ye people", one of the most sublime moments in music drama, bassoon *obbligato* and all, is most expressively rendered by Angel's Hermann Prey. No doubt Bayreuth's transmission of distance and echo in the suddenly emptied street added a great deal to this passage too; but the failure to convey that all-important bassoon tone across the necessary spaces only robbed Wagner the musician to pay Wagner the dramatist.

Only the Angel keeps the woodwinds at all times from being swallowed up by the rest of the ensemble. At the beginning of the third act interlude, for instance, right after Sachs' "*David, Gesell, schliess' den Laden Gut*", note the perfect balance between bassoons and cellos in unison, which would be unusually good even for a purely orchestral recording, and helps immeasurably to realize Wagner's keen sense of tone color. Just before this, following Sachs' "*Schnell auf die Füss'!*", a wonderful bass tuba solo makes itself felt in the London recording, and later in this version the same instrument adds a suitably gruesome comment to the Famine (*Hungersnoth*) Chorus of the bakers.

The Sound of Wagner: *Prelude to Act III, "Lohengrin"; "Tannhäuser" Overture; Siegfried's Funeral Music, "Götterdämmerung"; Dance of the Apprentices, Procession of the Mastersingers, "Die Meistersinger"; Ride of the Valkyries, Magic Fire Music, "Die Walküre"*; Concert Arts Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Capitol Stereo SP-8411, $5.98.

▲LEINSDORF'S Wagner is solid and acceptable. I would have preferred, however, a more deeply-probing performance of the *Siegfried Funeral Music;* the grief-stunned intensity in the score just doesn't come across the way it should. The other excerpts are given sturdy and satisfactory readings. The sound suffers from a lack of transparency at times but is, nevertheless, generally good. Stereo's spaciousness, here much in evidence, is well suited to the music. This brief taste of Wagner in stereo whets my appetite, as an unashamed Wagnerphile, for lots more of the same; the thought of music-drama performances captured stereophonically in the cavernous acoustics of Bayreuth is enough to make me drool. —P.C.P.

Stereodisc Miscellany

Bel Canto Stereophonic Demonstration Record. Bel Canto SR-1000, $5.95.

▲THIS may be the demonstration record to end all demonstration records. Side one, a stereo tour of Los Angeles, manages to capture every imaginable sound and a few others besides. Aside from the usual auto races and railroad trains, this one even got a horse race onto wax for posterity. Jack Wagner, a west coast tape jockey, provides a fine, though occasionally contrived, narration. Side two contains five selections from Bel Canto's catalogue. Technically a fine recording in every respect. The disc itself was produced by flowing different plastic colors together, thus producing a multicolored transparent plate which is very unusual to behold. —L.Z.

●

The Don Cossacks, conducted by Serge Jaroff. Columbia Stereo MS-6013, $5.98.

▲THESE Don Cossacks are about the noisiest chorus one is likely to encounter. This group's only endearing quality, as far as I am concerned, is the grandly rich and reverberant sonorities of its marvelous bassos, who can belch forth deep, deep tones with organ-like power and ease. In general, the performances here (of various Russian songs, mostly of folk origin) are coarse and, in spots, downright raucous. Despite the astounding vocal prowess demonstrated, I just can't find myself in accord with the overly lusty habits of these singers. I must admit, however, that during the brief moments when they exhibit a little restraint they produce a choral sound that could hardly be improved upon. Devotees of the Cossacks, I am sure, will be more than pleased with this recording. I found the sound adequate, although a bit too dry and close-in for best effectiveness with this sort of music; stereo is very much present.

—P.C.P.

German University Songs, Volume 2; Erich Kunz, Male Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera conducted by Anton Paulik. Vanguard Stereo VSD-2009, $5.95.

▲LOVELY fragments of old world charm are winningly performed in this album. Many of these songs are quite touching in their utter simplicity; there's something quite direct here, completely unspoiled by art and yet quite artful in its own way. The performances are more than sympathetic—gentle, expressive, and appropriate; and Kunz's German diction is impeccable. The sound quality is every bit the equal of that of a good monaural disc and has the added advantage of very apparent stereo, used in some songs, for instance, to place the soloist to one side and the chorus to the other, and in other songs to spread the chorus across the listening area —P.C.P.

●

The Concert Masters of New York—J. S. BACH: *Chaconne; Brandenburg Concerto No. 3;* **PAGANINI:** *La Campanella; Caprices Nos. 9, 20, and 24;* conducted by David Broekman. Decca Stereo DL-79955, $5.98.

▲MUSICALLY, this record is dull going. The arrangements of the solo violin pieces by Bach and Paganini are on the cumbersome and overbearing side; the Paganini transcriptions are particularly unimaginative and uninteresting. This highly skilled group (the jacket notes describe them—although more euphemistically—as a bunch of frustrated solo performers) plays stiffly and mechanically throughout; the bustling, spirited brightness of the Bach *Concerto* just isn't present. Soundwise, things are in excellent order; the stereo effects are very good —P.C.P

●

Beer Barrel Polka Time: Razzberry Reynolds and His All-Star Polka Band. Bel Canto Stereo SR-1003, $5.95.

▲ITS excellent stereo sound might recommend this recording as a good demonstration disc. Its uses for non-Polka fans, however, are nil. The performances thump away with a persistent and insistent sort of spiritedness that is head-splitting

—P.C.P.

The Mighty Wurlitzer and the Roaring Hi-Fi Twenties; Leonard Leigh (organ?). RCA Victor Stereo LSP-1665, $5.98.

▲TO this church organist whose inclinations are (and who feeds his congregation a diet that is) largely Bachian, the goings-on in this recording seem quite bacchanalian. This potpourri (various pop songs of the 1920s) is by turns noisy, corny, and syrupy, but darn it it's all sort of fun if you don't have to listen to too much of it at a time. Leigh seems to be a facile enough player; his registrations are interesting—gad, they're almost frightening—while his performances are certainly spirited. Hats off to Victor's engineers for the sound here; it's the closest thing to stereo tape I've yet heard on a disc recording. Separation and directionality are marvelous; there's little doubt as to which rank of pipes is where. Except for some minor fuzziness and a bit of surface noise in spots, clarity is excellent. Frequency response-wise and dynamics-wise the recording appears extremely wide-range. For all serious, dedicated, and discriminating collectors of foundation-shaking demonstration material this disc is an absolute "must". —P.C.P.

■

Concert Modern—GERSHWIN: *"Porgy and Bess" Overture; American in Paris; Rhapsody in Blue;* **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Nutcracker Suite;* **RODGERS:** *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* (all arranged by Frank Comstock); Les Brown and His Band of Renown. Capitol Stereo ST-959, $4.98.

▲THERE'S little justification, I feel, for the kind of jazzed-up and condensed arrangements we have here. Each of these pieces suffers tremendously in being reduced to a dull and drab common-denominator, robbed of its original spirit and effectiveness. I wonder if those responsible for this kind of thing delude themselves into thinking that they're improving matters; these arrangements make interesting vehicles for an exhibition of dance band gymnastics but little else. The performances are quite competent—flashy, dashy, and very professional. Capitol's sound leaves little to be desired.—P.C.P.

Sound Adventure: *Prelude for Percussion* (Miller); *Percussion Music* (Colgrass); *Percussion Music* (Strang); *Song of Quetzalcoatl* (Harrison); *Trio for Percussion* (Benson); Percussion Ensemble conducted by Paul Price. Period SPL-743, $4.98, and Stereo ST-PL-743, $5.95.

▲SOME months ago this reviewer had the opportunity of expressing at length his viewpoints on the role of percussion music (December, 1957 issue). There have been very few releases in the field since then. Period's addition to the growing catalogue is especially welcome, including as it does three new composers (Malloy, Miller, Gerald Strang, and Warren Benson). Of these Strang, once an assistant to Schönberg in California, is the best known. The products of Miller and Benson will enhance their places as composers of worth. Benson's reticence is a keen recognition of the subtle power that lies in the fricative sonorities of the multitudinous percussion instruments. Miller's *Prelude* is, to be sure, somewhat academic. The free power of glassy and opalescent sounds make the Harrison composition a thrilling experience. No less beautiful is Colgrass' *Percussion Music.* The concentration of means, the use of cyclic technique, mark this young man as outstanding among composers specializing in percussion. Paul Price's direction of all this music deserves its own award. A suggestion: listen to the works one at a sitting. The arguments become more truthful when not overargued. The sound is marvelous—even more so in stereo, although the regular LP is amply spacious. —A.C.

■

Lavalle in Hi-Fi: Woodwinds and band conducted by Paul Lavalle. RCA Victor LSP-1516, $5.98.

▲BRIGHT, brassy, thoroughly enjoyable stereo recordings of popular standards. Of particular note are the *Clarinet Polka,* with fourteen clarinets in unison; a modern hot jazz number entitled *Buzzards Bacchanale;* and a house-shaking *When Yuba plays the Rumba on the Tuba.* Broad, full stereo, clean sound, and quiet surfaces. —L.Z.

Baton and Bows: Morton Gould and his Orchestra. RCA Victor Stereo LSC-2217, $5.98.

▲THE jacket notes call these arrangements (of a collection of pieces by Fritz Kreisler and Jerome Kern) "stereophonic settings for string orchestra". As this description might lead one to suspect, tennis match effects are profuse throughout, with melodic fragments and instrumental groupings volleying back and forth incessantly. The whole game is played knee-deep in slush. The arrangements and the playing are sticky, sugary, and, after several minutes of listening, a bit sickening. But the sound is excellent, the stereo really superb. For those who like this sort of thing, the engineering makes this disc wonderful demonstration material. —P.C.P.

•

Symphony of the Air—TCHAIKOVSKY: *Nutcracker Suite;* **BERLIOZ:** *Roman Carnival Overture;* **WAGNER:** *Prelude to "Die Meistersinger".* Concert-Disc Stereo CS-25, $6.95.

▲LONG live the Symphony of the Air! Let us hope that the cohesiveness of spirit and intent which was a *sine qua non* in the preparation of these conductorless performances will not be rent asunder by economic pressures. These readings are a testament to the competence of this highly-skilled, well-trained, and dedicated group. While a slightly greater degree of flexibility might be desirable here—a shortcoming that is readily understandable, considering the circumstances—the playing is surefooted and intense. The sound is clean and with a fine stereo effect, although a bit dry. —P.C.P.

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The Original Trinidad Steel Band. Elektra Stereo 139, $5.95.

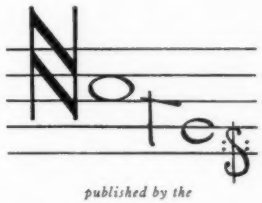
▲THESE steel bands are fascinating. The musical versatility of this bunch of sawed-off, hammered-out oil drums—and that's all these instruments are—is positively amazing. As presented here they produce an expressive and very haunting effect. I found two whole sides of this stuff, however, a little on the tedious side. No complaint on the sound; Elektra's disc stereo again shows itself to possess extremely distinct, wide separation.—P.C.P.

When you can't find some remembered review from a back issue of *The American Record Guide*, consult

The Index of Record Reviews

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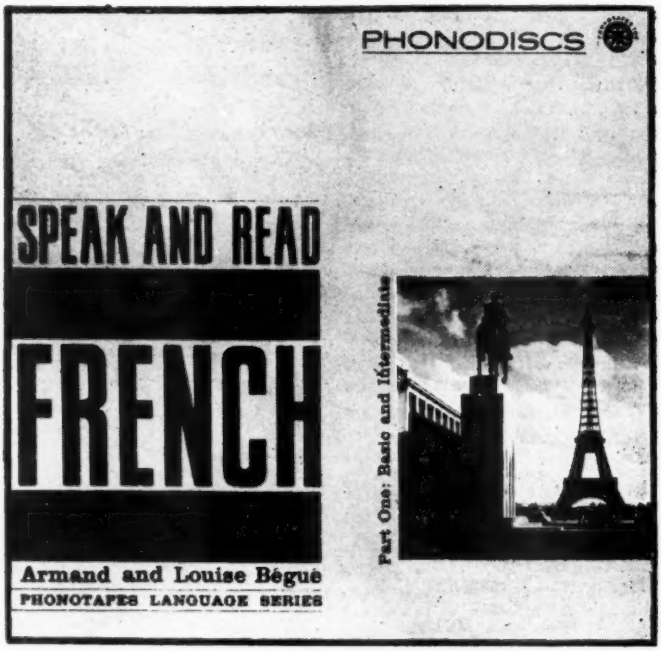
Hi-Fi Fiedler: RIMSKY KORSAKOV: *"Le Coq D'Or" Suite;* **ROSSINI:** *"William Tell" Overture;* **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Marche Slave;* Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. RCA Victor Stereo LSC-2100, $5.98.

▲BY way of review one need only say that its title tells the story accurately. This is typically first-rate Fiedler-Boston Pops workmanship: popular though shopworn items fancily packaged in sprightly performances which are filled, by turns, with all the necessary atmosphere, pep, and breadth. The fi is indeed hi—in fact, it is nothing short of spectacular in stereo. —P.C.P.

•

Havana in Hi-Fi: Richard Hayman and his Orchestra. Mercury SR-60000, $5.95.

▲FIVE of the nine selections heard here are lesser-known songs of Cuba's most famous composer, Ernesto Lecuona. For the lover of Spanish flavored Latin-American music this is a hard album to beat. Richard Hayman's large orchestra plays with gusto when required and appropriate tenderness in the softer Lecuona melodies. Hi-fi fans will also enjoy Mercury's big stereo, bright sound, and quiet surfaces. Recommended. —L.Z.



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Stereo Tapes

BARBER: *Adagio for Strings, Op. 11;* **ELGAR:** *Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Op. 47;* Boston Symphony Strings conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor Stereo BCS-139, $8.95.

▲THIS Barber piece is a compact and masterful little package of poetic intensity. Munch captures its spirit wonderfully; his is a truly moving performance. In addition, the Boston strings play with marvelous precision and lovely tone. The Elgar piece is similarly well played—one really could ask for little more in either reading. The engineering is of equally high quality. Balanced, close-in stereo still sounds the most spectacular of all to me, and that's just what we have here. The intensity of the Barber score is particularly enhanced by this stunning sound. —P.C.P.

•

GRIEG: *Concerto in A minor;* **RACHMANINOFF:** *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini;* Leonard Pennario (piano), Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Capitol Stereo ZF-85, $14.95.

▲AGAIN, as in an earlier Capitol release of the Tchaikovsky Concerto, Pennario reveals himself to be not much taken by the gentler spirits. When energy and rhythmic drive are called for, he can supply them in generous portions; he has technical dexterity and assuredness a-plenty. When, however, the music demands repose—lyricism, a tenderly strung pearl-thread of melody—he does not appear quite so comfortable and things do not come out quite so well. As a result, I found the performances here somewhat uneven: the more capr cious, showy variations of the Rachmaninoff and most of the last movement of the Grieg have all the necessary sparkle and vitality, but such things as the gossamer passages in the second movement of the Grieg and some of the quieter, contemplative middle variations of the Rachmaninoff simply fall flat. The performances aren't really objectionable however, by comparison to most others available, and they are certainly enhanced by Capitol's fine stereo sound. Recorded at a moderate distance, this tape gives a good illusion of concert hall listening, the only quibble being that the piano is a bit too spread out and difficult to locate at times. —P.C.P.

•

RAVEL: *Bolero;* **BIZET:** *"L'Arlésienne" Suite No. 2;* Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Paray. Mercury Stereo MCS5-50, $11.95.

▲BOTH of these readings are rather stiff and unwavering, although the *Bolero* comes off as the less offensive in this respect. Despite the general lack of flexibility, one can't help but be impressed with the precise playing Paray has marshaled. Mercury's engineering, too, is superlative. The *Bolero* in particular gains fresh interest and effectiveness from stereo: individual instruments are easily "placed", and Ravel's interesting timbre juxtapositions can be broken down into their components quite readily. —P.C.P.

•

STRAVINSKY: *The Firebird, Petrushka;* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Capitol Stereo ZF-49, $14.95.

▲THE imprint of his musical personality is so evident in these performances that one is inclined to say conducted *and arranged* by Leopold Stokowski. As A.K.

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correcdy points out in his March review of the corresponding disc release, these performances are simply not Stravinsky; most of the bite and savagery—the primitive elements of Stravinsky's musical communication — are missing. While I cannot, of course, deny the stylistic individualities manifest here, I will not condemn Stokowski for them. This is thrilling music-making; not exactly what the composer had in mind, to be sure, but thrilling nevertheless. Stokowski's conceptions are bold and sweeping—in the style of a fresco—and, as such, should not be examined with score in hand, searching for each misplaced slur, each deviation from the cold printed page. The details of the fresco are crude, but its totality is breath-taking. Capitol has provided a marvelous liveness, a hugeness of sound that ideally suits Stokowski's ideas for this music. The effectiveness of stereo is manifest. Highly recommended.—P.C.P.

•

Suppé Overtures: *Light Cavalry, Jolly Robbers, The Beautiful Galatea;* Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli. Mercury Stereo MS5-48, $8.95.

▲HERE is a tape with a major production flaw; the left channel has an almost incessant sputtering and low-frequency wheezing mixed in with the music. I must say this gave me some really anxious moments before I verified that the noise was definitely on the tape and not in my equipment. It all sounds to me very much like a defective electrolytic condenser—perhaps in the recording amplifier of the tape duplicating equipment. In any event, shame on Mercury, whose technical competence is usually above reproach. As to the music, an echo for A. K.'s comments (in the July ARG) on these delightful performances—one has to be indeed a snob to resist them. And, except as qualified above, a stereophonic double exclamation point for his praise of Mercury's sound. —P.C.P.

•

The Harp of Edward Vito: DEBUSSY: *Two Arabesques;* **PROKOFIEV:** *Prelude in C;* **PIERNÉ:** *Impromptu-Caprice for Harp;* **HINDEMITH:** *Sonata for Harp.* Stereo Age C-2, $12.50.

▲IN the midst of all the noise and commotion of high-powered stereo listening, this tape offers a refreshing and very welcome respite. It has a very lovely, intimate quality. The whole effect is indeed, as the notes on the tape carton say, "restful and relaxing". Vito shows himself to be a virtuoso performer, both musically and technically, using his talents to create a recital that is quite spell-binding from start to finish. The Pierné piece and the Hindemith Sonata (It seems as if Hindemith has written sonatas for just about every instrument under the sun!) I found especially effective. The sound is all that one could ask for. The harp is right in the listening room; one can hear just about every sound—even the minute squeaks of the fingers on the strings, and the noise of the pedals—except that of Vito's breathing. Highly recommended.—P.C.P.

•

The Palmer Method For Dancing: Jimmy Palmer and his Orchestra. Mercury MS2-21, $8.95.

▲SATISFACTORY for dancing, but just barely that. This tape contains three medleys in varying tempos, very dully arranged though well enough played. Ultra-fine stereo sound. —L.Z.

THE MONTH'S JAZZ

By MARTIN WILLIAMS

Sonny Stitt. Argo LP-629, $4.98. ▲STITT plays Charlie Parker's style with such real authority, feeling, and conviction that, as a British critic put it recently, if we had more like him we would have to change *all* our ideas about individuality and originality in jazz. To complicate matters, he also plays tenor in a rather different style but with equal conviction and depth. Here, with an unidentified trio, he contributes at least one very good blues melody on *Jack Spratt*, an exceptionally exciting solo improvisation on the same piece. He also shows that his tenor style is absorbing more of his Parker alto, and, despite a preponderance of fast tempos and brief tastelessness on *Cool Blues* and *Everyone Does It*, he has produced a good informal recital which has too much power and sureness to be called merely pastiche or imitation.

•

Teddy Wilson: *The Impeccable.* Verve MGV-8272, $4.98.
▲LARGELY through excellent re-visits to numbers he worked so well with in the thirties and early forties (*I Want To Be Happy, Honeysuckle Rose, Fine and Dandy*, and others), Wilson offers his most sustained LP in at least a couple of years and one which shows enough melodic imagination to be almost exemplary Wilson.

The Compleat B. G.

BOOK NOTE: *BG Off the Record* by D. R. Connor (Gaildonna Publishers, P. O. Box 135, Fairless Hills, Pa., $4.95) is, as its subtitle indicates, a "biodiscography" of Benny Goodman. The author lists commercial recordings, radio and Armed Forces Transcriptions, V-Discs, etc., with personnels and other data. It is a valuable and, as far as I know and have been able to check, accurate and thorough work—the kind of book which a critic is almost bound to describe as a "labor of love". But, as its chatty, friendly style, its sometimes questionable critical comments, and its almost constant enthusiasm perhaps indicate, it may really be a labor of infatuation. As a reference work, it is not only useful on Goodman alone, of course, but also, for the length of their association with him, many others as well. —M.W.

Earl Hines. Epic LN-3501, $3.98. ▲DISAPPOINTING. One of the unique and still exciting and authoritative pianists in jazz is bothered, inhibited, and almost done in here by the very poor work of a French bassist and drummer. *Save It Pretty Mamma* survives, and on most of the other numbers there is at least plenty of evidence of a splendid individuality—and of why you might try the recent and better playing on Fantasy 3238 instead.

•

Eddie Costa Quartet with Bill Evans: *Guys and Dolls Like Vibes.* Coral CRL-57230, $3.98.
▲DESPITE the show-tunes gimmick, rather tricky scoring in some opening theme statements, and some superficially bouncy rhythms here and there, this is an exceptional recording. Neither of the chief soloists is playing a safely conventional "modern" jazz style and each of them is discovering and exploring an original talent. Pianist Evans especially is succeeding, and his improvisations seem to have a deeper emotional content than Costa's usually exuberant explorations do—but the vibraphone is a cold instrument and it usually takes a highly developed rhythmic capacity to warm it up. By themselves, the improvisations on *I've Never Been In Love Before* and Evans' careful elaborations and explorations of brief key phrases on *If I Were A Bell* and elsewhere are enough to recommend this release.

•

J. J. in Person! Columbia CL-1161, $3.98.
Harold Land: *Harold in the Land of Jazz.* Contemporary C-3550, $4.98.
Pepper Adams/5. Mode 112. $4.98.
▲MUCH new jazz gets its intial impetus in the small group, and, when it reaches the second generation (a transition that can take place, in this medium, within ten years) stultifies there. The bop quintet that created so much in the hands of men like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis, has solidified into certain set patterns. Too often, within the loosely-arranged, free-blowing context, the soloist simply takes up time. There is no necessity in his playing, only various attempts to be pleasant or unpleasant. Ballads are generally avoided, because so few young musicians can play them, and when they are not avoided,

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THE JAZZ REVIEW

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they are evaded by a quickening of tempo that lends itself more readily to a harsh style of playing. Many arrangements have a Near Eastern tinge. The only first-generation bopper on these three records is J. J. Johnson, whose quintet includes the Miles Davis-like cornet of Nat Adderly and the light, precise piano of Tommy Flannagan. J. J. is mainly content here to hum pleasantly along, taking up time and saying little. The one exception is the last few bars of his solo on Thelonious Monk's *Mysterioso*, which for some reason J. J. says was written "just recently". The same arrangement that Monk wrote for Sonny Rollins and J.J. is used here, and just before Johnson ends his solo and returns to the arrangement he plays a few transitional bars which demonstrate that he understands the structure and content of the tune. The rest is surface. Harold Land's California quintet, including Rolf Ericson on trumpet and the late Carl Perkins on piano, play standard quintet fare. *Speak Low* is speeded up and Latinized; *Nieta* is very reminiscent of *Night in Tunisia*. Land has not yet settled into a style. Playing mostly in the gentler bop vein of Hank Mobley, he switches abruptly on the ballad, *You Don't Know What Love Is* and adopts the tone and many of the mannerisms of John Coltrane. *Grooveyard*, a Carl Perkins tune reminiscent of *Honeysuckle Rose*, contains the best moments in the album. Perkins' solo, which sounds like nothing quite so much as a John Lewis solo played by Horace Silver, is completely delightful. Pepper Adams, last year's New Star winner on baritone in the *Downbeat* Critic's Poll, leads the third quintet. His victory can only be considered a sad commentary on all baritone players. —J.G.

●

The Gerry Mulligan Quartet: *Reunion With Chet Baker.* World Pacific PJ-1241, $4.98.

▲THERE is little to say about this record. What seemed fresh and polished when Mulligan and Baker first played together, about five years ago, now only seems slick. The counterpoint is just as charming as it was, but time has given it more of the trappings of device than it had. The astonishing thing about these two men, five years after, is how little either of them seems to have learned. I hope very much, but am not quite sure, that the liner notes are a satire. —J.G.

●

The Dave Brubeck Quartet in Europe. Columbia CL-1168, $3.98.

▲THE subject of Brubeck has been done almost to death, but Brubeck continues to turn out album after album. This one, recorded at a concert in Copenhagen, is not among his more successful. He is apparently a musician of painful honesty, determined to go his own way, no matter how wrong-headed it may seem. This way consists of the attempt to make jazz out of several non-jazz devices which he has never succeeded in assimilating in the way that, say, John Lewis has. When he does use jazz, it is often the dullest jazz cliché, reminiscent of (his teacher) Milhaud's conception of jazz in "*La Creation du Monde*". His honesty will make him work through an idea, usually a melodic variation, until he gets completely lost in it and has to get back through the use of a jazz banality. It would seem that jazz is not his natural form of expression, but he is determined to play jazz, as if a man who knew five hundred words of French were to attempt a novel in that language. On *My One Bad Habit* he succeeds admirably—for one chorus. Paul Desmond is the same exquisite musician he always was, but his attempts to sound, as he put it recently, "hostile enough to be currently acceptable", sound out of place. Brubeck's *Watusi Drums*, by the way, shares a common origin with John Lewis' *Sun Dance* and sounds much like that piece. —J. G.

NYHFMS Notes

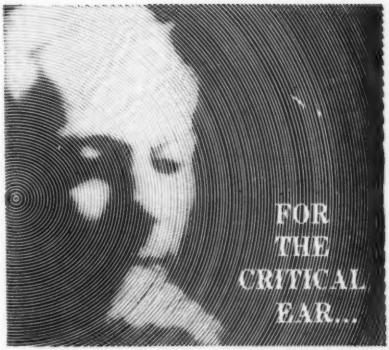
EARLIER TODAY (September 30th) I attended the press preview of the 1958 New York High Fidelity Music Show. This is the third annual gala sponsored by the Institute of High Fidelity Manufacturers, an organization of 107 component manufacturers, recording companies, and other interested parties. Its primary objectives are to set industry standards and to educate the public about component high fidelity. The theme of this year's fair was the "Age of Stereo", and indeed stereo was the center of attraction at virtually every exhibit. Previously unwelcome, but much in evidence this time, were completely *pre-packaged* hi-fi rigs. Many of these were complete, ready-to-play stereo sets. Of special interest in this field was the Pilot line.

Much of the equipment on display was monophonic, but adapted or re-worked for stereo (e.g. two conventional amplifiers on a single chassis). However, certain items seemed, either because of audio qualities or radical design, to stand out from the rest, and I want to make mention of them. It should be pointed out that these are personal, first impressions and not conclusions based on exhaustive tests.

Pickering (whose stereo cartridge is reported in this issue) unveiled a new turntable which revolves on an air cushion formed by the repulsion properties of two like magnets. Rumble is claimed (and seems) to be extremely low. The model I saw is only available at 33-⅓ speed.

In the field of kits both EICO and Dynakit impressed me with the quality and care inherent in their designs. Both have preamps and amplifiers designed for stereo operation. Dynakit offered the unusual-looking B&O stereo cartridge, while EICO, in addition to its large line of high fidelity kits, also showed its line of electronic test equipment, already well known to the professional and serious amateur engineer.

A pair of KLH Model Six speakers proved impressive in a stereo display at that company's exhibit. The price, about $250 for a pair, was equally impressive.



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Madison-Fielding unveiled an FM multiplex Decoder for use in those areas in which FM stations are multiplexing stereo programs using the Crosby compatible system. More on this will be forthcoming here in the near future.

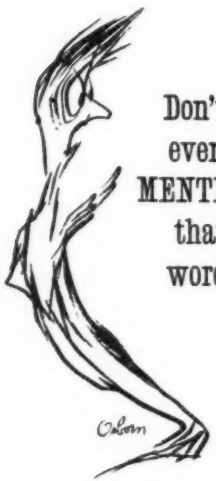
One of the most formidable speakers I have ever heard is Acoustic Research's new three-way system, the AR-3. There are very few systems that are capable of approximating the original sound source, especially on highly complex orchestral or organ recordings. The AR-3 is certainly one of them.

Space limitations militate against my going on about the other worthy displays. It remains only to say "thank you" to Joseph N. Benjamin and Jack Bernstein, respectively President and Public Relations Counsel of the Institute, for their highly successful labors. Incidentally, west coast readers are apprised that the Institute's show will be in San Francisco at the Cow Palace on February 6-7, and in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel on February 13-18. —L. Z.

(Continued from page 172)

permit him to belt out his tones with imposing power if not always equally satisfying quality. His *Nessun dorma* had many thrilling moments. Serafin successfully prevented him from taking matters into his own hands.

The much-lauded Anna Moffo [see page 192] was no more than competent as Liu. Her strong lyric voice is designed for just such large theaters, but its strength and richness did little to suggest the fragility of Liu. Success might have been forthcoming had she been able to achieve all the effects she was obviously trying to make. The voice, however, did not respond. It is obviously not yet disciplined enough to meet all the challenges of the lyric stage.



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The remainder of that "*Turandot*" cast was, with the exception of Wilderman, not up to par. Ping, Pang, and Pong need to be exceptionally well cast. They were not.

"*Il Trovatore*" was too spotty to rank with the Lyric Opera's best efforts, but despite its weaknesses it was a fascinating performance. The indisposition of Eileen Farrell gave Elinor Ross, who scored a triumph in the role of Leonora at Cincinnati last summer, a chance to make her debut with the Chicago company. She made it perfectly clear that she is a dramatic soprano of enormous potential, but it was just as obvious that she is not quite ready for top professional engagements. There are still obstacles to be overcome, kinks to be straightened out, and a final refinement of her partially well-trained voice to be made before she can make her full impact upon her audience. Most serious is her constant tendency to over-sing. When her tones are properly produced they are of exceptional beauty from top to bottom, but as soon as she forces, a nasty vibrato creeps in which nullifies some of her best effects. She had no need to strive for additional volume with such a naturally loud voice. Otherwise, she knew what she was about. Her mezza voce was often ravishing. I have never heard the little duet, *L'onda de' suoni mistici* (act III, scene III), between Leonora and Manrico, so beautifully sung. Even her trills were good, but she must learn to end them less abruptly and to move on to the next note with greater fluidity. Most rewarding of all was her real feeling for the Verdian line.

The manner in which Bjoerling's voice has held up after thirty years of singing is one of the wonders of our age. Now and then a soft passage or a legato phrase will reveal some strain but, on the whole, he sounds as good as he did ten or fifteen years ago. Bastianini did not hit his stride until the end of the evening. Schaenen's fast tempi hit him especially hard.

Simionato's Azucena was skillfully contrived dramatically and vocally opulent despite the fact that she was not quite in top form. Her scenes with Bjoerling constituted the most consistently distinguished singing of the evening.

SOUND IDEAS

THE PICKERING Stereo Cartridge was one of the first magnetic stereo units to be offered for general sale. The bugs that infested a few of these early models have been eliminated, resulting in a fine quality cartridge at what approaches, in these inflationary days, a bargain price. The Unipoise arm appeared prior to the introduction of stereo discs, and proved itself a satisfactory solution to the problems of arm design. A consequence of its unique design is an extremely attractive assembly which might help overcome the reluctance of the fair sex to exposed components in the living room.

Test Results

Arm: The Model 196 Unipoise Arm is a tapered, lightweight metal shaft, terminated at the narrow end by a permanently affixed Pickering stereo cartridge, with a counterweight at the other end. An extension of this weight is brought up above the arm and a small cup is attached at its apex. This cup rests on the pointed tip of the supporting shaft. The result is an extremely free-moving arm in both vertical and lateral planes. The low center of gravity of the arm prevents any sideways wobble. For installation a quarter-inch hole is drilled at the precise distance from the turntable spindle recommended in the instructions accompanying the unit. (This distance is important because upon its accuracy is dependent the inherently low tracking error of the arm.) Alongside this quarter-inch hole a half-inch hole is drilled to accommodate the wire leads from the cartridge. The arm shaft is mounted in the smaller hole by means of a single screw after the cartridge leads have been passed through the larger hole. A template for these operations is provided. A word of caution here—the tip of the arm shaft is a very sharp point, so leave the cardboard protector on the shaft until it is mounted. The arm is then simply set on the point and the installation is complete. In the process of testing for other considerations the Pickering was found to be picking up excessive hum from the turntable motor. Re-mounting of the arm, so that the cartridge did not swing directly over the motor, eliminated hum completely. It is suggested that this be tested before drilling holes and mounting the arm. To set the proper weight a knob midway on the underside of the arm is adjusted until the stylus assembly is parallel *to the body of the cartridge*. The two leads from the arm are labeled *left channel* and *right channel* and they are plugged directly in to the appropriate magnetic inputs of the preamplifier. The unit tracked even warped records well and there were no resonances in the arm within the range of the cartridge. A well-designed handle makes the arm easy to use. Incidentally, the arm rest comes with a built-in stylus brush, which is a definite convenience.

Cartridge: On the model tested (the 196) the cartridge is an integral, non-removable part of the arm; the cartridge also is available separately as the model 371. The cartridge features a removable stylus assembly mounted in a T-shaped plastic block, thus facilitating stylus inspection and replacement at home. When I began testing the cartridge, I found the sound to be unpleasantly sharp and shrill. A test record showed a 5 db peak at 8,000 cycles with a broad plateau extending from about 3,000 to 10,000 cycles. As the

Manufacturer's Data—
Response: 10 to 30,000db
Output: 1mv/cm/dyne
Channel Separation: 20db +
Load Impedance: 27,000 to 47,000 ohms
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manufacturer recommended, I had terminated the pins of the cartridge in a 47,000 ohm resistor. When I changed this to a 27,000 ohm resistor (the other extreme of Pickering's recommended load impedance) the peak disappeared completely, resulting in smooth, natural sound from the best recordings. Test record results (Elektra 35) showed the cartridge to be two decibels down at 12,000 cycles with a rapid fall-off beyond. At the other end of the sound spectrum the cartridge was down three decibels at twenty cycles, though only one db at twenty-five cycles. Between these two extremes response was flat within a half db. In sum, the Pickering is capable of extracting from present-day stereo records all that is on them with smooth, very natural sound. Distortion was very low. Channel separation is better than the published specifications, providing well-defined stereo.

As a monophonic cartridge the Pickering was judged (like all other stereo cartridges thus far) to be not quite so good as the best monophonic cartridges. It is this reviewer's opinion that at this time no stereo cartridge is so well suited to the playing of monophonic records as are the best monophonic cartridges. Thus, if you already have a fine monophonic cartridge, a stereo unit should be considered on its own merits rather than as a replacement for a good monophonic cartridge.

Final tests showed the output of the two stereo channels to be within two decibels of each other throughout their entire range. Output was sufficiently high to drive any preamplifier to full output without transformers.

Conclusion

Without the least regard to price considerations the Pickering cartridge-and-arm must be rated as a top-quality unit, able to deliver results from stereo discs that will match those of the finest associated equipment. When price is considered, this stereo cartridge-and-arm is a definite bargain. Again, however, I must caution that this opinion is based on a termination impedance of 27,000 ohms. At the 47,000 ohm figure this cartridge does not operate satisfactorily.

—LARRY ZIDE

Department of Amplification (Speaker Section)

TO THE EDITOR:

In a parenthetical aside inserted in Larry Zide's "The Truth About Stereo Discs" (July ARG), you invited comment. I would like to disagree with one of the points that you made.

Mr. Zide wrote: "If you have a large 3- or 4-way speaker system with separate speakers it might be better to consider investing in two small acoustic-suspension speaker systems, which are more likely to give a true stereo *effect*, than are a pair of big systems, which tend to diffuse it."

You added a paragraph of your own, which included the following: ". . .to my ears there remains a difference between the *effect* possible with a pair of compact loudspeakers and the musical *realism* provided by the best systems, singly or in tandem."

There is here a clearly implied distinction between "compact" loudspeakers (which acoustic suspension speaker systems are) and the "best" systems, as though a compact loudspeaker is admittedly and by definition inferior to the best. My particular interest in commenting on this distinction lies in the fact that the patent for the acoustic suspension speaker system is in my name.

Several years ago it was true that the best reproduction of musical bass required, without exception, a very large speaker enclosure—generally between ten and fifteen cubic feet. It was also true that the amount of speaker bass distortion that had to be tolerated was far greater than the distortion allowed in any other reproducing component.

The acoustic suspension speaker system was designed to advance the art by radically reducing this bass distortion, and its small size is a fortunate but coincidental by-product. The principle involved is a simple one; the almost ideal elasticity of the sealed-in air of a small cabinet is substituted for the inherently imperfect elasticity of the conventional speaker's mechanical suspensions. Like the new air-suspension cars, the speaker cone rides on air instead of on mechanical springs.

Two things follow. First, the motion of the cone is able to follow the dictates of the amplifier's electrical signal more accurately; and second, the system *must* be provided with a sealed enclosure of just the right dimensions. Too large an enclosure volume weakens the pneumatic spring, without which the special speaker cannot operate properly. Thus the compact size of an acoustic suspension system is an actual prerequisite to what we believe to be its unprecedented performance.

It is of course possible to disagree thoroughly with our estimate of this performance. There has been, however, enough general recognition of the acoustic suspension system as representing an absolute advance in quality to preclude automatic pairing of compactness and inferiority in speaker systems. For example, of the two consumer organizations that reported on our AR-1 speaker, one adopted it as its bass reference standard, and the other gave it its highest and rarely used "AA" rating. (In neither case was size taken into consideration.) The AR-1 and AR-2 are also widely used as test instruments in acoustical laboratories and as monitor speakers in recording and broadcast studios. Your readers may take interest in the fact that the original recording of some of their discs was judged and corrected on the basis of playback (of trial tapes) through acoustic suspension speaker systems.

Sincerely yours,
EDGAR VILLCHUR

(*Continued from page 179*)

It found a remarkably feeble solution by using excerpts from three other new operatic albums: the Sextet from "*Lucia di Lammermoor*", with Roberta Peters, Jan Peerce, Philip Maero, and Giorgio Tozzi, among others; *O monumento*! and *Suicidio*! from "*La Gioconda*", sung by Leonard Warren and Zinka Milanov respectively; and the Santuzza-Turiddu duet from "*Cavalleria Rusticana*", with Renata Tebaldi and Jussi Bjoerling.

Folk Music

By ROBERT SHERMAN

Singing Family of the Cumberlands: *Jean Ritchie.* Riverside RLP-12-653, $4.98.

The Ritchie Family of Kentucky. Folkways FA-2316, $5.95.

▲IN these two unusual and most interesting albums, Jean Ritchie offers many ballads and folk songs which she learned while growing up in the Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky with her parents and thirteen brothers and sisters—her "singing family", as she puts it.

On the Riverside disc, Miss Ritchie comments on the songs and the circumstances under which they were sung, giving us many warm reminiscences of her childhood. She describes, for instance, the telling of a "haunt" story around the fireplace of an evening and sings *The Unquiet Grave*; she recalls the party gaiety of a "molasses stir-off", then sings the lilting *Gonna See My True Love*; and she follows a tender account of her first kiss with a lovely version of *Awake, Awake, You Drowsy Sleeper.*

On the Folkways recording Miss Ritchie interviews various members of her family, and they are heard singing the traditional melodies which had been part of their lives for generations. We hear a baptismal hymn at the local church and the children's boisterous singing games; Jean's mother sings *The Darby Ram*, (which *her* mother used as a lullaby) and her three-year-old son Peter joins her in the delightful cradle song, *Dance to Your Daddy*; and no less than fifty-eight Ritchies assemble for the singing of the Christmas carol *Brightest and Best.*

Both recordings have a wholesome and altogether charming freshness, and both are highly recommended to the serious folk collector. Although the Folkways disc is perhaps the more valuable as a musical documentary, the prevalence of unaccompanied singing and the generally uneven sound quality restricts its general appeal, and I think that the average listener will be happier with the Riverside album.

●

Songs of the World: *The Norman Luboff Choir.* Columbia C2L-13, $7.96.

▲THIS appealing two-disc set covers a lot of ground, containing songs from no less than twenty-one countries (twenty-four, if you count Scotland, Wales, and Ireland separately). The type of rich, highly arranged settings favored by the Luboff Choir is anathema to many folk music enthusiasts, but I think even the purist will agree that the skilled singers perform with taste and great musicality, and that the finely engineered recordings make thoroughly enjoyable, if not authentic listening. The choice of songs is excellent, tending toward the pensive, nostalgic sort, and striking a nice balance between the familiar (*Greensleeves, Aupres de ma Blonde, Cockles and Mussels*, etc.) and more offbeat material. Of the latter, I found especially pleasing the charming melodies from China and Japan, along with three lovely lullabies from Sweden, Spain, and Austria. The handsome album contains complete texts and many striking photographs.

●

American Favorite Ballads: *Pete Seeger.* Folkways FA-2321, $5.95.

▲THE busy Pete Seeger presents yet another fine album for Folkways (his twenty-fourth, I think!), this one a companion disc to his earlier and similarly titled collection of American songs (FA-2320). Included are such favorites as *Oh! Susannah, The Riddle Song*, and *Careless Love*, along with a number of interesting Negro songs, many of which, like *Black Girl* and *Stagolee*, were in the repertory of the great folk artist Leadbelly. If Seeger's singing here does not always have all the sparkle and the infectious enthusiasm we have come to expect from him, his performances are nevertheless forthright and completely convincing. Clean, but rather unresonant recorded sound.

●

Norwegian Folk Songs: *Pelle Joner.* Folkways FW-8725, $5.95.

▲THE versatile Pelle Joner, who divides his time in Oslo between singing and research in biochemistry, here presents sixteen ballads and folk songs from his native country. Providing his own guitar accompaniments, Joner sings in a relaxed and straightforward, if not particularly expressive, manner, and seems most at home with the several lightly humorous ditties on the record. Since Norwegian folk music is scantily represented on LP, the disc is of considerable interest—and would have been a most valuable addition to the catalogues were it not for the unacceptable sonics. Rarely have I heard a modern recording with more unpleasant sonud— the shallow, filtered quality is the sort we put up with on thirty-year-old col-

lector's items—and consequently I can recommend the disc only to those listeners for whom fidelity is no object. Norwegian texts and full translations are included.

●

Blow, Boys, Blow: *A. L. Lloyd and Ewan MacColl.* Tradition TLP-1026, $4.98.

▲THIS may not be a particularly beautiful album, but it captures the vigorous, salty flavor of the sea better than any other I have heard. Messrs. Lloyd and MacColl sing with rough voices, sturdy rhythms, and the lusty abandon that must have characterized the chanting aboard the clipper ships a century ago. Several of the sixteen chanteys are performed *a cappella*, while the others have concertina, guitar, banjo, or mandolin accompaniments, and in each case the performance suits the mood and purpose of the music perfectly. If you like your folk music "straight", this will make a worthy addition to your collection. Informative liner notes by Lloyd are included.

●

Folk Songs from Armenia; Westminster WF-12013, $4.98.

▲THE colorful, exotic music of Armenia, the little Soviet republic in the southern Caucasus, has a unique flavor, influenced as it is both by Russian music and by the eastern musical styles of its other two neighbors, Iran and Turkey. Offering a varied sampling of Armenian traditional *and* composed music, this recording contains work songs, romantic ballads, and robust, festive peasant dances—all in spirited and of course authentic performances by native choruses and instrumental ensembles. Especially intriguing are several lovely songs played on two unusual sounding folk instruments: the tarr, a plucked, lute-like instrument, and the plaintive duduk, an ancient wood or reed instrument of the flute family. Happily, the fine performances are matched by clear, well-balanced sound, and the concise explanatory notes add much to one's enjoyment.

●

Songs Children Sing in Italy: *Bob and and Louise DeCormier.* Judson J-3025, $3.98.

▲LILTING and engaging is this set of Italian children's songs and dances. They are performed with graceful charm and humor by this young American couple. The DeCormiers sing with an ingratiating blend of sophistication and naiveté, a quality which is achieved also by Leo Israel's deft English translations and Rudi Goehr's imaginative musical settings. Since many of the numbers are obviously intended as game songs, it's a pity that no instructions (or texts for that matter) are included, but in spite of that, the entire album makes thoroughly agreeable listening for children of all ages.

(Continued from page 169)

involved. The result is less the product of any definable formula and more that of Harman's didactic instincts.

Thus we have a book of six chapters. The first, on the development of Christian Chant, is the least adequate. For an art as productive and durable as Gregorian Chant, the dominant music of the West during a good four centuries (if no more), the coverage allotted here is, proportionately speaking, a bit too limited. This chapter does, on the other hand, contain an admirable explanation of the nature and structure of the modes. The second chapter, on the beginnings of polyphony, is perhaps the best, and includes an unusually good discussion of Leoninus and Perotinus. As Harman follows the development of medieval polyphony in successive excellent chapters he handles basic principles, terms, personalities,styles, and movements with great ease and clarity. His concluding chapter on the early Renaissance, perhaps inevitably, leaves things dangling in mid-air, but then one must consider this book in relation also to its successor in this series. Included also in the appendices and indices is an extensive list of recordings—based on British catalogues, but many of the same recordings are available over here, most notably "The History of Music in Sound". This discography, however, is organized around a very clumsy and confusing numerical system; and it is keyed to the text by means only of a very vague and ill-defined use of the symbol in the text instead of by any concrete references.

In the final analysis, the book will have to be judged in the light of its partners in the series. But this first volume suggests that (though the price really is a bit excessive) the set may be one of great usefulness, not only as a textbook for music students—there is a great deal that is purely technical in the theoretical explanations of notation, structure, and style—but also for the layman with some background who seeks a good basic book to give him a clear, over-all understanding of this music. In this sense the book hardly gives the last word on the subject, but it does give some very valuable ones.

Unlikely Corners

WHY NOT LOOK below the surface occasionally and find out what it is in the direct appeal of the popular tune which makes the audience go home whistling; to see if there is not some artistic impulse hidden in unlikely corners. . .

—Ralph Vaughan William

THE POPULATION of show business, like that of the rest of the world, may be more or less accurately divided into boys and girls. In show business, at least, age is no factor; we have some quite aged "boys" and "girls" around.

The late Gertrude Lawrence, however, was a woman—warm, vibrant, enchanting, and mature. She is best remembered for her later portrayals, in which she performed with grace and intelligence. Some of her twentyish hoyden quality was re-created when she sang *Jenny* in Ira Gershwin's and Kurt Weill's *"Lady In The Dark"*, which is one of the eleven selections in **Gertrude Lawrence—A Remembrance** (Decca DL-8673). The recordings were made in the twilight of Miss Lawrence's career, when her never really large voice was even smaller. Still, this is a remembrance to have, for in it Miss Lawrence sings songs long indentified with her, such as the Gershwins' *Someone To Watch Over Me* and *Do, Do, Do*, Braham and Furber's *Limehouse Blues*, Coward's *Someday I'll Find You*, the already mentioned *Jenny*, and another Gershwin song, *I've Got a Crush on You*, sung at its proper satirical tempo. Gertrude Lawrence's greatness may not have reposed in her vocal powers, but her unforgettable personality comes through in her recordings and we are lucky to have them.

Julie Andrews Sings (Victor LPM-1681) a fine collection of songs by Arlen, Berlin, Carmichael, Coward, the Gershwins, Kern, and so on in a beautifully clear lyrical soprano. Highlights of the album are *It Might as Well Be Spring* (Rodgers-Hammerstein), *He Loves and She Loves* (the Gershwins), *I'm Old Fashioned* (Mercer-Kern), *You're a Builder-Upper* (I. Gershwin-Harburg-Arlen), *My Ship* (I. Gershwin-Weill) and *Matelot* (Coward). Whoever planned this album at Victor did some thinking, and the results are highly commendable. The accompaniment by Irwin Kostal and his orchestra is excellent also. Has it occurred to anyone that Miss Andrews' voice would be perfect for a collection of Kern songs of the Princess Theater era?

A wonderful collection of songs affectingly sung may be found on **Trouble Is a Man** (Columbia CL-1153). The singer is Judy Holliday, who sings arrangements of Glenn Osser backed by an orchestra under Buster Davis. All these are names to be reckoned with; so are the names of the composers and lyricists: the album's title song was written by Alec Wilder. Irving Berlin is represented by three songs—*What'll I Do?*, *I Got Lost in His Arms*, and one of his least known but most haunting and plaintive, *How About Me?* Hugh Martin is represented by the charming *What I Was Warned About* (from *"Make A Wish"*) and *An Occasional Man* (a collaboration with Ralph Blane); the first song only makes me wish that Victor would once again make the original cast album of *"Make A Wish"* available. Miss Holliday also sings the fine *Lonely Town* from Leonard Bernstein's best musical, *"On The Town"*. About the only criticism I can offer is that the predominantly ballad aspect of the set, particularly the first side, may strike some as dull programming, but the excellence of the songs more than makes up for this. This is one of the most tasteful albums I've heard this year—absolutely gimmickless.

Another superb collection may be had in **Moments Like These** (Victor LPM-1719) in which the old pro (this is a figurative expression) Dinah Shore sings in her unaffected way such songs as *I'll Remember April* (Raye-DePaul-Johnston), *These Foolish Things* (Link-Strachey-Maschwitz), *Moments Like This* (Lane-

Loesser), *I Loved Him* (a little-known Cole Porter song), *What's New?* (Haggart-Burke), and *I Can Dream, Can't I?* (Fain-Kahal). The Gershwins are represented by *How Long Has This Been Going On?*—and well too—and Harold Arlen by the neglected, but memorable none the less, *Now I Know* (the lyrics are by Ted Koehler). Of course, these last two will only serve to give comfort to those of mine enemies who are spreading the rumor that all you need do to get a good mention in these corners is to include one song each by the Gershwins and Arlen. Not likely, I assure you, if you don't perform them right. Still, Miss Shore can do no wrong, and she is more right than usual with so fine a selection of first-rate songs.

Speaking of Gershwin and Arlen, some of their efforts are given somewhat less-than-romantic settings in an interesting album entitled **The Nearness Of You** (EmArcy 36134), featuring the singing of Helen Merrill with a modern jazz backing (it must be modern—there's a flute ain't there?). Miss Merrill sings reasonably straight for a so-called jazz singer; in fact, she sings with taste and imagination. Her backing is likewise and lends a musical interest to the proceedings. This is a good contrast to the string-dominated song collections we are accustomed to. Miss Merrill does a particularly moving job with the excellent Arthur Schwartz-Howard Dietz song, *I See Your Face Before Me*. Oh yes, the Gershwin song is *Summertime* and Arlen's are *When the Sun Comes Out* and *This Time the Dream's on Me*. The latter two are rather neglected these days and it was good to hear them.

Abbe Lane's stock in trade is obvious—nay, it is outstanding. There is nothing really outstanding about her voice, though. She sings well enough; but more importantly she photographs beautifully in a red slip for album covers and this one is titled **The Lady In Red** (Victor LPM-1688). It is, to me, more notable for the arrangements by Sid Ramin than for Miss Lane's vocalizing. She sings two songs, *Femininity* and *We're Not Children*, from the no-longer-running *"Oh, Captain!"*. I believe she sang them in the show. No voice, perhaps, but Miss Lane still has her assets.

The simply titled **Gisele** (Victor LPM-1790) is an album sung by Gisele MacKenzie. Miss MacKenzie seems to me to be a fine singer who rarely gets to sing very good songs (I hasten to add that this has not kept her from the best-seller lists; but it is rare, also, that really good songs become best sellers). Her albums are put together, as far as the songs are concerned, in a nondescript manner: recent hits, great songs of the past, undistinguished songs. Of course, the singer's following is more interested in her than in her material, but in Miss MacKenzie's case uniformly better material is in order. There are some good songs in the present album, such as the Adler-Ross *Hey There*, and *Moonglow* (the theme from *"Picnic"*), but not much.

Frankly I must admit to being a little tired of the Variety-ese which classifies a vocalist as a "belter", but I suppose this best describes Mary Lou Brewer, who may be heard belting on **My Man** (Westminster WP-6081). While her voice betrays an occasional tendency toward hardness, Miss Brewer impressed me as a good solid vocalist of the old school (she herself, however, is a mere youngster). By the old school I mean the blues-shouting (not the real thing but the Broadway) type, and the liner notes properly refer to her as the "New Queen of the Red-Hot Mamas" in the tradition of Sophie Tucker. If you like this sort of thing, here it is as applied to *I'm Just Wild About Harry, I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues, Some of These Days, I May Be Wrong*, and *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, among others.

We come now to the boys, and I shall begin by expressing my pleasure in hearing, for the first time actually, the tenor of Peter Palmer, the former "Li'l Abner" of Broadway. I must confess that I never got very far into that score, so that I never really heard its star sing. But in **Presenting Peter Palmer** (Victor LPM-1736) his excellent voice is heard to advantage in some very good songs along with the conventional corn. Of the former, Palmer sings Ray Noble's *The Very Thought of You*, Youmans' *Orchids In the Moonlight*, Ben Okland's *I'll Take Romance* and the Kern-Hammerstein *All the Things You Are*, complete with verse. Palmer has a fine voice and an equally fine way with a good song. Suggestion to RCA: why not record an album of duets by Julie Andrews and Peter Palmer?

The popular Johnny Mathis is joined by the orchestra of Percy Faith in **Swing Softly** (Columbia CL-1165)—an album of variable quality. Whether or not you will like it depends on your reaction to the rather stylized singing. The liner notes point out that the Mathis approach "combines a strong respect for the meaning of the lyrics and an equally strong respect for the melody *without being pinned down by either*." The italics are mine. While the vocalist does no untoward violence to any of the songs in this album, I feel that the original song writers knew better than he what they were doing when they composed their songs. It seems to be no contribution to art to sing "Oh, Love walked right in" when Ira Gershwin did not employ the "Oh". —E. J.

(Continued from page 175)

victory throughout the world. On his eightieth birthday, his army marched in triumph.

He beamed as he explained the *Hommage* program: Fauré's *Elégie* his own *Three Magi Kings* and a Sardana (which he called "a poematic symphony"), and a Bach saraband.

"I wish I had been there", I said.

"We have a recording."

"May I hear it?" I asked excitedly. He was as eager to hear it as I. He recalled Martita from her chores in the kitchen and requested her to put the record on, which she was very glad to do.

"An army of cellists!" she said as she opened the machine. So submerged is she in her husband's genius that she uttered these words as if they were her own. Casals listened to all the music with his eyes closed, his expression beatific, his right hand conducting it all over again—even the perennial pipe had been thrust aside. As each new number began he announced it and fell under the spell of his own magic. As for the sounds of the cello, they were almost unbearable in their beauty—in their religiosity, I should say. It was as if God were asking Casals questions and he were answering as expressively, as best a man can.

I found it difficult to say goodbye to Martita and her extraordinary old, young husband. They made me promise that I would come back and the thought that I might made parting easier. When I was out on the sidewalk I heard a call, and turned around. Casals and Martita were standing in the doorway waving to me.

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